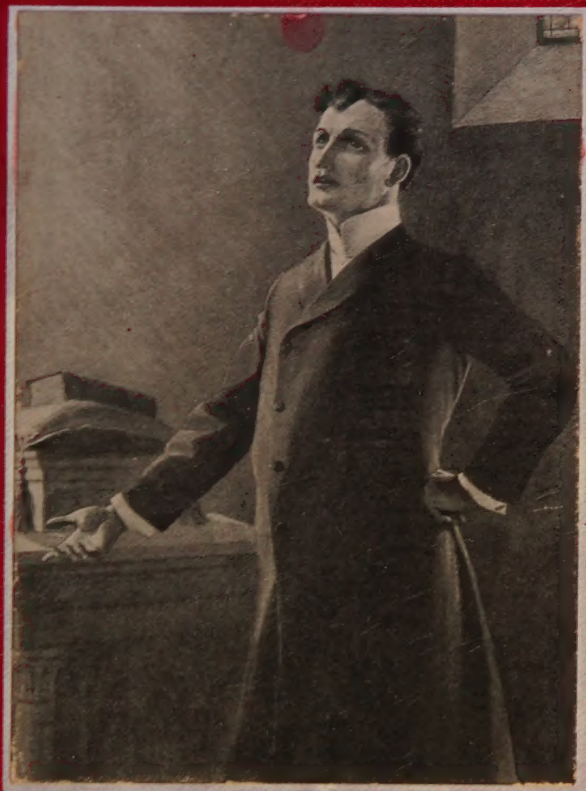
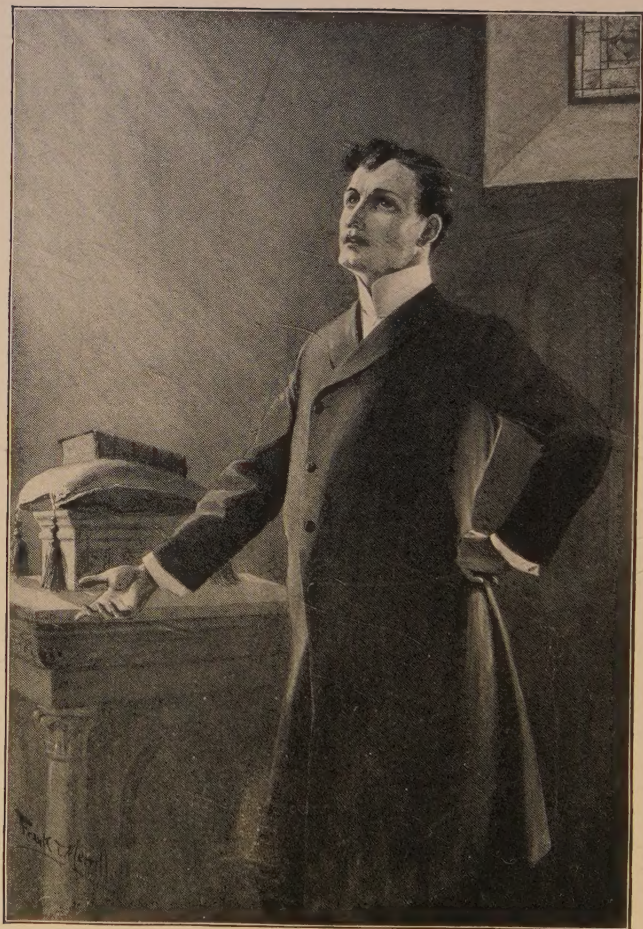


STEPHEN HOLTON



CHARLES FELTON PIDGIN



STEPHEN HOLTON

A Story of Life as It Is in Town and Country

By

Charles Felton Pidgin

Author of

“Quincy Adams Sawyer” and “Blennerhassett”

With a frontispiece by

FRANK T. MERRILL



Boston: L. C. PAGE &
COMPANY, *Publishers*

Copyright, 1902
BY L. C. PAGE & COMPANY
(INCORPORATED)

All rights reserved

Published, April, 1902

Seventh Impression

Colonial Press
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, Mass , U. S. A.

THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED TO THE
True Friends of Reform

PREFACE

WHEN this story was begun, it was with the intention of making it one of general human interest without advertng in particular terms to any one of the great sins of the nation. But, in the course of my reading and study, the magnitude of the account which may properly be charged to the great vice of Intemperance amazed me. When it is considered that more than four-fifths of the inmates of our prisons and reformatory institutions, more than one-third of the paupers, and more than one-fourth of those confined for the public good in insane asylums attribute their condition, directly or indirectly, to intoxicating liquors, the dark picture thus presented is surely most humiliating to us as a nation. When we know that, from the homes broken up by such enforced absences of mothers and fathers, thousands of children become burdens upon their relatives and friends, or dependent upon town, city, or State charity, then the contemplation of the results of the great vice becomes truly appalling.

The characters in the story are purely creations of fiction and the incidents therein are wholly

imaginary. It has not been my intention to invent harrowing events to be presented as "terrible examples," but only to evolve them during the progress of the story. If, however, it is seen that the greatest offender is not the so-called "drunken bum," but the educated and intelligent man whose passions are inflamed and kept alive by intoxicating liquors, then an important fact will have been brought to public attention. But what means shall be adopted to counteract or remedy the existing evil? It is said that if the tentacles of the ocean monster, called the octopus, are cut off, one by one, nature replaces them by others, and no vital injury is inflicted. It may be argued that if similar measures are taken with regard to the great social monster, Intemperance, the result secured will be but temporary. So far, recourse has been had to the law, but evidence has shown that neither the prohibitory nor the license system are likely to provide either a temporary remedy or a permanent cure. No legislation has ever succeeded in making men good.

The tendency to reform must come from within the man himself. As Stephen Holton is made to say in the story: "I do not expect to see the millennium at once. We can only reach it by slow and progressive stages." The means of securing one of these progressive stages outlined in the book may not be an ideal one, but it is hoped that it

will supply a suggestion to thinking minds, which may turn it to practical benefit. The women of America are more interested than any other class in our communities in securing the closure of the drinking-saloons in which their fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons take their first steps in crime.

That the people are in earnest is shown by the tacit approval given in the West to the lawless proceedings of those who seek to banish the bar by physical measures, by destroying counters, and smashing mirrors, decanters, and bottles, with axes and bludgeons. But such proceedings, which savour of lynch law, will not long be tolerated by a law-abiding community. They will recognise the fact that the rightful way of securing rightful ends is only by the adoption of rightful measures, and not those which are contrary to established law and order.

The temperance question is the paramount issue of the times, and the first practical step toward its solution lies in the banishment of the bar, for the liquor saloon has no proper place in our twentieth century civilisation. It is an undesired legacy, and the children of the present should not longer be made to suffer for the sins of their fathers.

C. F. P.

*Gray Chambers, 20 Mt. Vernon St., Boston, Mass.,
April, 1902.*

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE JUDKINSES	11
II. THE MISSION IN THE SLUMS	24
III. THE TEMPLE OF WEALTH AND ONE OF ITS MANSIONS	40
IV. "THE ROAD TO RUIN"	57
V. "CROWNER'S QUEST"	69
VI. "THOU SHALT NOT BECOME A GLUTTON"	78
VII. "MISS FROU-FROU"	84
VIII. "THE GOLDEN CALF"	94
IX. "WAY DOWN EAST"	108
X. PASTORAL CALLS	114
XI. THE ELOPEMENT	125
XII. THE YOUNG WIFE	132
XIII. A COUNTRYMAN IN THE CITY . . .	141
XIV. BUYING ON INSTALMENTS	149
XV. ON THE DOWNWARD TRACK	156
XVI. FATHER AND SON	160
XVII. ON THE STAGE	170
XVIII. THE FALLING STAR	178
XIX. A MOTHER'S CRY	185
XX. THE TEMPERANCE EVANGELIST . . .	195
XXI. THE CASE OF CAPTAIN LITHGOW . .	211
XXII. THE TRAIL ENDS	223

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIII. AFTERWARD	230
XXIV. A TERRIBLE EVENT	236
XXV. CONSEQUENCES	246
XXVI. "THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL"	259
XXVII. THE NEW LOVE.	276
XXVIII. "BECAUSE I LOVED HIM"	289
XXIX. DICK HURLBURT'S CONFESSION	299
XXX. GATHERED THREADS.	308

STEPHEN HOLTON

CHAPTER I.

THE JUDKINSES.

“ICHABOD, jes’ stop a’pesterin’ that ’ere hoss. Jes’ as like as not he’ll out with his hind legs and kick you inter kingdom come.”

The individual thus admonished was a small boy, apparently not more than eight years of age. His name was Ichabod Judkins, and he was the youngest child of Mr. and Mrs. Jethro Judkins, of North Gayville, Maine. He was small for his age, being in reality ten years old, but though short in stature, was stout in person, with rosy cheeks, black hair, and a pair of mischievous black eyes.

The speaker who uttered this admonition was the mother of the young hopeful, Mrs. Betsey Judkins, who was rinsing out some milk-pans at the kitchen sink, directly in front of a window which looked out upon the large grass plot where Tom, the old family horse, tied to a stake in the centre of the

plot, was cropping the long, thick grass. Ichabod, imitating a scene which he had seen recently at the circus, was giving the horse several sharp cuts with a stout switch, which accelerated Tom's pace to as near an approach to a gallop as it was possible for his old and tired limbs to attain. Round and round the circle he went, Ichabod at each turn giving him an added impetus with his improvised whip. At each of these blows the horse would kick up vigorously with his hind legs, and it was the possibility of his hoofs coming in contact with her son's person that led the careful Mrs. Judkins to interpose her words of caution.

Yes, Mrs. Judkins was a prudent, careful housewife. Careful of her house, for the ownership of which she and her husband had worked early and late during the first years of their married life; careful of the furniture which it contained, many articles of which were heirlooms in the family; careful of their food to see that none was wasted, and that the material used was well cooked that there might be no excuse for wasting it; careful of her own clothing and that of her family, for, although the farm supplied the means of subsistence, there was no market for their surplus near at hand and very little money came into the family till. Mrs. Judkins was of medium height and at least forty-five years of age, retaining many features of her

youthful good looks; in fact, when she became the wife of Jethro Judkins, twenty-five years before, she was considered the belle of the town. There was not a cleaner kept or better ordered house in North Gayville than the one over which she presided.

As his mother's words fell on his ear, Ichabod gave several astonishingly long leaps and was soon outside of the circle which formed the circus route of the old horse. Behind a clump of bushes which shaded him from his mother's sight, Ichabod wondered whether he should seek some new field of action or keep up his circus performance from behind the clump of bushes, whence he could make a foray upon old Tom and then retreat beyond reach of his mother's inspection. His uncertainty was soon brought to a termination by hearing his name called in loud tones from the other side of the farmhouse.

"Ichabod! Ichabod! come round here quick as yer legs will carry yer and turn this 'ere grindstun."

"Drat the grindstone!" muttered Ichabod.

Grasping the top rail of the fence he swung himself over into the road. As he did so his eye caught that of his sister Sareta, who, clad in a calico gown and wearing a huge sunbonnet, was working among the flowers in the little garden at the front of the house. Taking a long run, he vaulted over the picket fence which enclosed the garden, and

landed upon both feet in one of the flower-beds, crushing beyond recovery to life two tender slips to the growth of which his sister had looked longingly forward.

"You miserable little boy!" she cried, as she grasped him by the back of the neck. He was taken unawares, and, unable to resist, soon found himself flat upon his back in one of the little paths in the garden.

"What shall I do to you? You have killed both of those flowers, which have such beautiful blossoms when they are full grown."

Ichabod sat up with a rueful expression on his countenance.

"I'm awful thorry, thith," he said, slowly. He had a slight lisp, which had often been the means of extricating him from sundry mishaps, as his expressions and apologies were often so droll that the victims of his pranks usually burst into shouts of laughter when they should have administered words of reproof. On this occasion, Sareta could not help smiling, despite her anger, at the comicality of her brother's looks, and then turned her attention to her beloved slips, which she endeavoured by tender and careful manipulations to restore to their former position, banking them up with the moist loam, and breathing an inward hope that they might still flourish.

As she bent over her plants, she made a pretty picture, with her brown eyes, wavy brown hair, and glowing cheeks — the sweetest and purest of the fragrant, old-fashioned blooms that filled the garden with their green leaves and bright colours. There were marigolds and sweet-williams, pansies and China asters, four-o'clocks and bachelors'-buttons, and running up on the sides of the house were morning-glories and nasturtiums. A large sunflower stood near the upper corner of the garden, close to the road; while on one side of the gate, close to the front fence, were several lilac bushes, behind which Ichabod was sheltered.

Ichabod was not inclined to rise from his sitting posture in the path. He knew that he was screened from sight by the fence and the flowers, and that, if his father came in search of him, he would not be likely to find him. By falling into one kind of trouble, he had escaped from another which would have been much harder to bear. Anything that Ichabod liked to do, he did with his whole heart, but it was rarely that the desires of his parents, regarding work to be performed by him, coincided with his own ideas on the subject.

As his father's voice ceased to call his name, Ichabod rose slowly to his feet. As he did so, his sister approached him and asked:

"Didn't I hear father calling you just as you jumped over the fence?"

"P'raps," allowed the boy, "but he ain't calling me now."

"You should say 'isn't,'" protested his sister.

"I will," retorted Ich, "when I have had so much education as you have got."

As he said this, he opened the gate quietly and sneaked along outside the fence under cover of the lilac bushes. As he turned the corner of the garden, he made a bolt for the road, hoping, by his speed, to escape observation. The farmyard at the rear of the house opened out upon the road, and it was just possible that his father might be in a position which would allow him to see him. If this took place, he knew that he would be obliged to answer his parent's call and be condemned to an hour's hard work at the hated grindstone.

So great was his desire to reach the road unseen by his father that he paid but little attention to his surroundings, and thus it happened that his career of flight was cut short by his stumbling headlong over the old house-dog, Rogue, who had dropped himself lazily a few feet from the corner of the garden. Rogue, rudely awakened from his nap by this sudden and unexpected onslaught, did not stop to recognise his assailant, but, springing up, attacked Ichabod viciously before he could regain his feet. Ichabod might have come to grief, but for the fact that the loud barking and growls of the

dog attracted the attention of Farmer Judkins, who arrived upon the scene in time to rescue his son. With his clothing badly torn in the affray, and covered with dust from head to foot, Ichabod presented a pitiable spectacle as his somewhat irate parent, grasping him firmly by the ear, led him into the farmyard, where the rest of the family were gathered.

His twin sisters, Polly and Dolly, who had been feeding the chickens, had turned from their occupation to learn the cause of Rogue's loud barking. At sight of their brother, their girlish sympathies were at once aroused and they ran toward him to learn the cause of his trouble.

"What's the matter, Ichie?" cried Polly. "Did old Tom kick you?"

"'Twould have served him right if he had," said Mrs. Judkins, who stood in the back door.

"No, I guess 'tain't anything quite so bad as that," said Mr. Judkins, as he released his hold upon Ichabod's ear, and explained his son's mishap.

Then Polly and Dolly each took an arm and led Ichabod to his mother, who stood ready to ascertain the extent of her son's injuries, the sharpness of her remark having been followed by a surge of motherly feeling. Thus it is that mothers always forgive and forget the misdemeanour out of sympathy for the one who has committed it.

By the kind ministrations of his mother and Sareta, who had entered the kitchen, the dust was soon brushed from Ichabod's clothing and his hands and face cleansed. It was found that he had a bad bruise on the right arm, caused by it striking a rock as he fell. Mrs. Judkins got the bottle of "anarchy," as she called it, while Sareta brought a bottle containing a balsam distilled from balm of Gilead buds. Then a discussion took place between mother and daughter as to which was the better for the bruise. It was finally decided to use both, and after the arm had been bathed with arnica, a cloth, saturated with balm of Gilead, was bound around it. Then his mother said that he had better lie down on the haircloth sofa in the sitting-room and she thought he would be all right by supper time.

Mr. Judkins returned to the barn to resume his interrupted work. He was a tall, angular, raw-boned man, big-jointed at wrist and ankles, with a skin tanned and wrinkled, largely by hard work, for he was barely fifty years of age. On his way back, he passed by the woodshed, where, sunning himself in an armchair tilted back against the shack, sat his father, Adoniram Judkins, usually called 'Ram Judkins, smoking his pipe. Beside him, in a little rocking-chair, sat his wife's mother, Grandma Crane, knitting a stocking.

“ Well, son,” quavered the old man, “ what’s all these didos been about, anyhow? ”

Farmer Judkins informed him, and passed on to the barn.

“ Well,” said old ’Ram, turning to Grandma Crane, “ if that ’ere Ichabod was my boy, I’d dust his jacket and then sit down and read him a few appropriate passages of Scripter suited to the occasion.”

“ Well, I dunno,” replied Grandma Crane, “ lickin’ children don’t do much good now’days. As ’Bijah used to say, and truer words was never spoken — you didn’t know ’Bijah, but he was one of the most truthful men. He and me lived together nigh on to forty year and I never caught him in a lie in all my life.”

The old lady dropped a stitch and it was some little time before she recovered it and her equanimity, and then ’Ram asked:

“ Well, what was it ’Bijah said? ”

“ Oh, I mos’ forgot. What was we talkin’ about? Oh, about Ichabod and lickin’ boys. Well, you see, me and ’Bijah had a discussion one evenin’ ’bout our boy John — he is dead now — he was a little feller, but he had a terrible temper, and if we told him to do anything and he didn’t want to, he jus’ wouldn’t, and there was no use argifyin’ the matter. He went off to sea and we never heard from him aterwards.”

The old lady wiped a tear from her eye with one end of the stocking and then relapsed into silence again. But 'Ram was not to be put off in any such way.

"Well, Mrs. Crane," he said, — and he knew if he called her Mrs. Crane he would secure her undivided attention at once, — "you said that your husband, 'Bijah, said something once about lickin' boys and girls, but you haven't yet told me what he said."

"Good law!" said the old lady; "I think my mind must be wandering a little. Well, as 'Bijah said, and as I told you before, he was the most truthful man and hardly never said anything that he couldn't back up. Well, one evening, we had a discussion, and after we had talked and talked and talked, he jus' brought his hand down on the table kinder powerful like — it was a way he had — and he said in a voice I have never forgotten, 'Boys will be boys.'"

"Yaas, yaas," replied 'Ram, who, although outwardly always professing a great respect for the sayings of the deceased 'Bijah, had, nevertheless, an inward contempt for him as a moral teacher. "Yaas," he repeated, "boys will be boys, 'less their parents do somethin' to make men on 'em. Now I draw my maxims from Holy Writ, and I think the sayings of Scriptor, if followed, are the most likely to turn out good men and women."

"No doubt on it," interposed Grandma Crane; "that is what 'Bijah allus said. 'Spare the rod and spile the child,' was his favourite sayin'."

"Yaas," said 'Ram, elevating his eyebrows, "that is very good doctrine, but it ain't Scriptor language. In Solomon's Proverbs 'tis writ: 'He that spareth his rod, hateth his son.' Now, Jethro was my only son. I didn't hate him, and so, follerin' out the Scriptor injunction, I gave him more lickin's and wallopin's and larrupin's than he's got fingers and toes. It didn't seem to hurt him none nuther."

"Well," remarked Grandma Crane, as she wiped a tear from her eye with her knuckle, "p'raps ef 'Bijah had licked John, he might have stayed to hum, but I fancy he'd 'a' gone so much the sooner."

"'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it,' is another one of Solomon's proverbs," continued 'Ram, for he saw an opportunity to use his Scriptural attainments on a willing listener.

"I'm sure 'Bijah and I tried to," sobbed Grandma Crane, for her feelings overcame her, "an' I lived for years and years in the hope that John would come back and be a blessin' to both on us."

"Well, I wouldn't cry, grandma," said 'Ram, softening somewhat. "The Lord's ways are not always our ways, but they are the best after all." The old man was about to begin on a fresh lot of

Scriptural quotations, when the supper-bell interrupted him.

At supper, Jethro, the oldest son, a frank, shrewd-looking youth of twenty-four, made his appearance. He had just come from the village post-office, and laid a letter down by his father's plate, saying, "I think, dad, this looks like an answer to your notice in the papers."

Mr. Judkins opened the letter and read:

"BOSTON, July 1, 189-.

"MR. JETHRO JUDKINS.

"*Dear Sir:* — In reply to your advertisement in to-day's *Morning Telegram*, I would say that your terms are entirely satisfactory. Will you be able to accommodate a friend and myself at your farm for at least a month, beginning the second Monday in July? Kindly reply at once and oblige,

"Very truly yours,

"CHESTER LETHBRIDGE."

"Well, Betsey, wat do you say? Two on 'em for a month ain't so bad." He tossed the letter to his wife for her inspection and decision.

"Now, my advice to you, Betsey, is to be mighty keerful," broke in grandma. "I remember about two years before my husband 'Bijah died, we took a young man from the city to board. When the

end of the first week come he said he hadn't got a check he expected, and so it went on until he had been with us nigh onto four weeks, when he suddenly skipped out and took two of my best silver spoons, which 'Bijah's mother left him. Now, my advice to you, Betsey, is to lock up your spoons in the big chist every night, an' don't you, Adoniram, don't you leave your gold watch hangin' on the bedpost, same as you allus does, but you jus' tuck it in 'tween the straw bed and the feather bed, and jus' see that you tuck it in far enough, for them city fellers are light-fingered."

"Nonsense, grandma!" laughed Sareta, "I don't think these two will steal anything from us."

"Well," declared Mrs. Judkins, "we'll risk it. Write at once, Jethro, an' say we'll take 'em."

CHAPTER II.

THE MISSION IN THE SLUMS.

FOR hours the burning rays of the sun had been beating down upon the pavements and sidewalks of Schwelkers Court. It was now six o'clock, very near to the supper hour in that locality. The toilers who lived in the tall tenement houses which stood upon both sides of the narrow court, were wending their way homeward.

In the upper portions of the city, a cooling breeze was sweeping through the wide avenues and wider boulevards, invigorating the weary and cooling the brows of those who were lying upon beds of suffering, but no such cool breeze had, as yet, permeated the narrow confines of Schwelkers Court. Instead, the latent heat was being radiated from the pavements and sidewalks, and, as one walked along, it seemed as though the heat were tangible, to be grasped in the hand or kicked one side by the foot.

An air of unusual quiet pervaded the court. Not, however, so unusual at this hour, for the toilers were eating their evening meal, to the consumption of

which they brought that most savoury of all sauces — hunger — the satisfaction of which gives so much greater pleasure than the mere gratification of the appetite.

An Italian, dragging behind him one of those ponderous piano-organs, turned from Minton Street into Schwelkers Court at about half-past six. He was accompanied by his daughter, who was attired in a short skirt and wore the national head-dress, flaming with bright colours. There were bracelets of uncertain value upon her arms and rings upon her fingers, while, in one hand, she carried a tambourine. When about half-way up the court, the piano-organ man came to a stop and, grasping the handle, the air was soon filled with the music of a popular dance. From a score of windows, little, smiling faces looked out. The piano-organ man had timed his visit aright. Now was the hour of rest and relaxation within the precincts which he had invaded.

Then out of the houses the children came running, even as the rats came tumbling out of the houses in Browning's well-known legend, "The Pied Piper of Hamelin." In the story, there were white rats and black rats and gray rats; in Schwelkers Court there were boys and girls: black-haired, light-haired, tow-headed, and red-haired boys, and little girls whose hair ran through the same range

of colouring. As though under the influence of a magician's wand, they gathered about the organ, but in this case the music did not, as in the old legend, lead the children away to some deep cave in the mountains to be held as hostages for the payment of the sum of money rightfully due. The piano-organ man's revenue came from willing hands, and many coppers were thrown into the tambourine extended by the small hand of the Italian girl, while with one accord the little girls and boys took partners and were soon keeping time to the music.

One might have called this dance "The Carnival of Nations," — for the lithe Jewess, the graceful Italian, the sturdy little Dutch *fräulein*, and the rollicking Irish lass, with their partners, likewise of varied races, were whirling round together. In no other country could such a harmonious comingling of different nationalities take place. It is the American atmosphere which softens race prejudices and makes it possible, figuratively speaking, for the lion and the lamb to lie down side by side.

At the head of a short flight of steps which led down to a basement tenement occupied by Mrs. Milligan, familiarly known as the Widder Milligan, sat two young hoodlums, Budd Moran and Terence Harrigan.

"What's the matter with Mamie Kerrigan?"

asked Budd Moran, pointing at one of the older girls. "Her face looks like a boiled lobster."

"I should think it would," replied Terry. "When she was bringing the milk from the store this morning, she drank up half of it. Her mother gave her a batin', and when her dad came home at noon ter dinner, he gave her another, and I should think by her looks that after supper both on 'em took a hand at it again."

"Hello, Mamie," cried out Budd. "What's the price of milk?"

Mamie turned up her nose and gave him a disdainful glance. Then her tormentor cried out: "Say, Mamie, you drunk so much milk it makes you dance like a calf."

Now, Mamie was not a good dancer, and this palpable hit caused a burst of laughter from the children who had gathered about the dancers. Mamie's temper was none of the best and her revengeful feelings had been aroused by the severe castigations that she had received during the day. Stepping into the street, she picked up a stone and hurled it with all her might at Budd Moran. He dodged the missile, which continued its course, breaking one of the Widder Milligan's windows into a hundred pieces.

As soon as Mamie heard the sound of breaking glass, she turned and ran toward her home at the

upper end of the court. She knew that if a demand was made upon her father to pay for the broken glass, that the whippings she had received during the day for drinking the milk were slight in comparison with those in store for her if her father were called upon to pay for the broken window.

The basement door was suddenly opened and the Widow Milligan appeared, her face white with rage. Rushing upon Moran and his crony, she grasped each of them by his coat collar and bumped their heads together in an unmerciful manner, crying as she did so:

“Ye miserable spalpeens, to take the bread out of a poor widder’s mouth by breakin’ her windy, when ye know that the skinflint of a landlord will make me pay for it.”

Terry recovered sufficient breath to say, “We didn’t do it. It was Mamie Kerrigan.”

The widow went on: “If aither of yez had the spirit of a man in yez, ye’d take the blame upon yerself instid of layin’ it on to that poor girl, who has a hard time of it anyway with her brute of a father and her baste of a mother. I heard what ye said to her, for one of me windies was open, and nayther of yez is a gintleman or ever will be, or I’d make ye pay for the windy, but I’m an honest woman and I know all the money ye get, ye make by gamblin’ down in the pool-room yonder,

and as for yer fathers, if they have any money left, it must be because they haven't paid for the beer that I saw yez goin' for last night."

With these words she gave each of the two a stinging blow upon the ear. Then she vanished, slamming the basement door behind her, while Moran and Harrigan, jeered at by the lookers-on, shuffled away.

A few minutes later, when the piano-organ man left Schwelkers Court, he was followed down to Minton Street by the smaller children, who resumed their dancing on the broader sidewalk, and no leaders of a cotillion, listening to the strains of a stringed orchestra, could have enjoyed the harmony any more than did these children, dancing to the music of the organ. Again the piano-organ man moved on, and again the children had just started to follow him, when the notes of a sweet-toned bell sounded upon the air. Then the children, as with one accord, instead of following the organ, turned in the opposite direction.

On the opposite side of Minton Street, one block from Schwelkers Court, was a short blind alley called Mission Place, at the end of which stood the little church, from the belfry of which came the sound of the sweet-toned bell. Upon one side of the door was a wooden sign, painted black, upon which in gold letters were the words, "Bethany

Mission Chapel." On the other side of the door was a similar frame, upon which a large white card was tacked, bearing in large black letters the words, "Evening Social. Come In. All are Welcome."

This little church had belonged to a congregation which many years before had moved up town to a more fashionable location. For many years it remained closed, for no church in the vicinity seemed disposed to provide it with a pastor and conduct it as an adjunct to their own. It had, however, been open for the past two years, being conducted by the Rev. Stephen Holton, a young man about twenty-five years of age. His father had been a well-to-do farmer in a small Vermont town. Stephen's mother had died when he was about eight years of age. For another eight years he lived with his father, who had engaged a housekeeper, going to school in the winter and helping his father with the farm work in the summer. His father saw that the boy had abilities which fitted him for a broader life of action than could be found upon a farm in a small town. So, when Stephen was sixteen years of age, his father told him that, if he wished to go to college, he would furnish him with money to fit himself to enter and would pay his expenses during his college life.

Stephen chose to enter Harvard. He worked diligently to fit himself for his examinations, and after

his entrance, worked still more diligently to acquire what he considered to be the greatest treasure that a man could possess — an education. In fact, he worked so hard that he came near breaking down from the mental strain, but his vacations were passed at home with his father on the farm, and his natural physical vigour was each year recruited to its normal strength by the healthful exercise he obtained by assisting his father on the farm, a labour which he insisted upon performing. He graduated with high honours from the Divinity School and was soon ordained as pastor of a church in a beautiful Massachusetts town. Here he remained only a year.

It was before the days of college settlements, in which, at the present time, divinity students and others interested in the present and future welfare of their fellow men spend much of their time giving instruction and supplying amusement for the poor and ignorant and the criminal, but the Rev. Stephen Holton was ahead of the times. His heart was full of a desire to do all that he could for the unfortunate and degraded. He resigned his pastorate, came to the great city, and secured the coöperation of some wealthy men and women, who purchased for him the small church which he had named the Bethany Mission Chapel. Here he had gathered about him the old and young who occupied the

slum district, near the centre of which the little chapel was located.

Stephen Holton knew that the native-born American objects strongly to what may be known as paternalism. It is the American idea, and the idea is the offspring of American spirit, to pay for social opportunities rather than to receive them as gifts. He also knew that the natives of foreign countries, transported to American soil, soon imbibe the American spirit and turn their faces as strongly against the ways of the Old World as do their native-born brethren. Stephen also realised that his social gatherings must be as democratic in their nature as any public meeting or gathering for public amusement. So Protestant and Catholic, Jew and Gentile met on a plane of absolute equality at these meetings, and nothing was said or done in any way to injure their respective religious feelings.

The assemblage was composed of the residents of Schwelkers Court, Minton Street, and the other streets, places, and alleys which were contiguous and formed part of the slum district. At the first social meeting, Mr. Holton had suggested that the children should sit in the front seats, while their elders occupied those at the rear, and this plan had been followed at each meeting.

An admission fee of one cent was charged for each person, whether old or young. The money

derived from the admission fees had been formed into a fund called "The Bethany Mission Chapel Medical Fund." As from two to three hundred persons attended each social, the year's receipts were considerable. The fund was used by Mr. Holton to pay for the services of physicians and for medicines needed by those attendants at the socials who, from any cause, were unable to pay for the same. A portion of the fund was also used to pay for the care of the chapel, women who were needy and who lived in the district being employed for the purpose.

Stephen Holton rang the little bell, the understood signal for the assemblage to come to order, and the gaze of every one was fixed upon him as he advanced to the front of the platform. He was tall in stature and lithe in figure. As a result of those days of hard work which he had performed so willingly upon the Vermont farm, his frame was well-knit and muscular. His hair and eyebrows were of raven blackness, and beneath the latter shone a pair of piercing black eyes. The hair had a habit of falling down over the forehead. When it did so, the owner would give it an impatient toss backward, when it would resume its former position. During the delivery of his sermons or addresses, or when engaged in an exciting discussion, his nostrils would dilate and a quiver would show

itself in his under lip. His face was smooth shaven, and this fact disclosed a square-set jaw, indicative of strong opinions, firm will, and a rigid perseverance in any course of action which he had blocked out for himself.

"Friends," he said, and his clear, resonant voice was heard in every part of the chapel, "this meeting completes the first year of our social gatherings. This is our fifty-second meeting. Neither the heat of summer nor the cold of winter, neither snow nor rain have prevented us from meeting together on Wednesday evening of each week to become acquainted with each other and to enjoy the simple programme of amusement provided. The question to be decided to-night is whether these social meetings shall be continued for another year. Those in favour will please manifest it by saying 'aye.'"

A storm of "ayes," interspersed with cries of "yes, yes," rose from the assemblage.

"Those opposed," said Mr. Holton.

A dead silence reigned.

"It is a unanimous vote," continued Mr. Holton, "and next Wednesday evening will begin our second year, which, I hope, will be more prosperous than our first."

For a moment a babel of voices rose from the audience. The speaker made no attempt to check it for awhile, as these short intervals afforded for

friendly conversation were greatly prized by his auditors. Finally he rang the little bell again and order was once more secured.

"It is our usual custom, you know, to open our meeting with the singing of some popular song. What shall it be?"

"'Rosie O'Grady,' sir," came from three or four voices in the front rows.

Stephen Holton nodded to one of the older girls, who was seated at the piano, and for the next few minutes the little chapel rang with the swinging melody.

Then the clergyman advanced to the front of the platform. "My friends," he began, "for our little science lesson, this evening, I shall talk about the bee. That little insect by whose industry the hives are filled with wax and honey, both of which articles are appropriated by man for his own use, without any return whatever being made to the workers who have laid by these stores for them."

"What is honey?" said little Hugh Madden to Patsy Fleming, by whose side he sat.

"They say," whispered Patsy, "that it's some-thin' like molasses, but a dale schwater. I have seen it in the windy, but I never eat any."

"In every hive," continued Mr. Holton, "there are three kinds of bees, the queen bee, the male bees, and the female bees. Now, strange as it may seem,

all the hard work in the beehive is done by the female bees."

"Begorra! it's gettin' to be like that iverywhere," said the Widow Milligan, in an undertone.

"There is one queen bee," continued the speaker, "in every hive, and she is the mother of the whole swarm, the name given to a hive full of bees. Scientists say that usually queen bees lay twenty millions of eggs."

"A quane bee must have to do a grate dale of washin' for a family like that," said the Widow Milligan to herself.

"The male bees," Mr. Holton continued, "do no work at all, and for that reason they are named drones."

"They ought to change the name of Schwelkers Court to the Beehive," said the Widow Milligan in so loud a voice that many heads were turned toward her. The old lady smiled, and then taking her snuff-box from her pocket, took a pinch, and soon enjoyed a hearty sneeze.

The speaker went on: "But when the hive is full of wax and honey, then the drones meet their fate, for the female bees turn upon them, sting them to death, and throw them out of the hive.

"After the bees have filled the hive with wax and honey, they leave it and, headed by the queen bee, swarm to some other hive, where they begin their

work all over again. The bees are very much like some people who toil all their lives to provide for the wants of others and, when old age comes, have nothing put by for themselves."

"True for you!" cried the Widow Milligan, in a loud voice, unable to restrain her feelings any longer.

"Now," asked Mr. Holton, "what do you suppose the bees do when a mouse, for instance, gets into their hive?"

Up went Patsy Fleming's hand, and in response to a nod from Mr. Holton the little fellow cried out: "They knocks him out."

"No," said Mr. Holton, "the mouse is too large for the bees to knock him out, as Patsy says. They first sting him to death; then, as they are unable to move him, they enclose him in a case made of beeswax. They seal him up tight in a waxen coffin, so that no odour can escape and spoil the honey."

Mr. Holton gave a few more interesting facts in relation to the habits of the honey-bee. As was his custom, he closed the short lecture with an interesting anecdote. This one related to an Irishman who landed in America and, never having seen a bee, caught it in his hand as he would a house-fly. The result was that he was very badly stung.

"What do you think the Irishman said," asked Mr. Holton, "when he felt the burning sting in his hand?"

Up went Patsy Fleming's hand and once more he was given permission to state his opinion. "I think I know what he said, sor, but I wouldn't like to say it right out in church."

This answer provoked a general laugh in which Mr. Holton was forced to join. Then the former concluded his little story by saying that the Irishman remarked that the bee was a very pretty fly, but that he had a very hot foot.

Once more the babel of voices rose and was allowed to go unchecked for several minutes. Again Mr. Holton rang the little bell and the clamour ceased.

"I will omit," he said, "this evening, my usual short talk on temperance. You have heard it many times, but I fear, from some evidences that I have seen lately, that all of you have not remembered the lessons which I have tried to teach. What I say to you on the subject of temperance is not simply for your information. I wish you to become examples to others and to speak to others the truths that I endeavour to impart to you. It is only by such earnest work, in which all must engage, that this district can be reclaimed and a more creditable record obtained for us in the minds of our fellow citizens who occupy other portions of the city."

The girl pianist played the opening measures of a

temperance song, one of the most popular ones at the Bethany Mission, which was sung with great spirit and manifest earnestness. Then the tones of the nine o'clock bell was heard, and the hour to which the social meeting was limited was over.

With loud cries, the younger portion of the audience sprang from their seats and started for their homes on the dead run, followed at a more leisurely pace by their elders. Once more the doorsteps in Schwelkers Court were filled with seekers for cooling breezes. The children, one by one, went off to bed, while their elders sat and discussed the events of the day. By eleven o'clock all had retired to their rooms, except a few who found the temperature indoors unbearable, and resolved to sleep on their doorsteps.

Up from the pavements and into the court drifted the night air, hot and stupefying. The pulse of the slums beat feebler and feebler. Soon, save for the moan of a sick child, or the gasp of a restless sleeper, Schwelkers Court was stifled in silence.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEMPLE OF WEALTH AND ONE OF ITS MANSIONS.

THE next morning Stephen Holton sat in the little room in the chapel which was his office and study. He had been called from his sleep the night before to sit at the bedside of one of his parishioners who was at the point of death, to pray for him, and to utter words of solace to the bereaved family whose sole support he was. Such nights had been frequent of late with Stephen, and their strain was beginning to tell. As he sat there before his desk, his mind reverted to the green fields which surrounded his father's house, to the tall trees whose wide-spreading branches gave a grateful shade, and to the blue river from whose bosom, even in the hottest weather, cool breezes came. For a moment the feeling came over him that he would lock up the chapel, put the key in his pocket, and take the first train for those fields of rest, recreation, and recuperation. But he at once dismissed the temptation, and, turning to his desk, took up his pen to make out his monthly report to the trustees of the little chapel.

The door of the study creaked upon its hinges. Stephen looked up and saw a portly man standing in the doorway, who advanced toward the desk and said, in a voice which savoured much of pomposity and a little of dignity: "Do I address the Reverend Stephen Holton?"

"That is my name, sir," said Stephen. "Take a chair, I am at your service."

Depositing his gold-headed cane upon the corner of the desk, the portly man accepted Stephen's invitation.

"My name, sir, is Sudbury, Solomon Sudbury. I am a member of the Riverside Avenue Church and chairman of its Financial Committee, of which the other members are Mr. Henry Lempster, president of the First National Bank, Mr. Horatio Skilton, and Mr. David Emerson, the well-known real estate owner. Our pastor, the Reverend Robert Livingstone Cartwright, has been suffering from ill-health for some time, and at our last meeting we voted to give him a vacation until the middle of September. Our church is always closed from the first of August until the third Sunday in September."

Stephen did not see in what manner this long introduction concerned him and remarked: "My chapel is open every day in the year, from seven o'clock in the morning until nine o'clock at night. I have had no vacation for two years."

Mr. Sudbury removed his hat and placed it carefully upon the end of the desk. Then, settling himself still more comfortably in the chair which he occupied, he continued :

“ We have heard of the good work which you are doing in this neighbourhood, and this fact led me to make a proposition to our Financial Committee, of which, as I told you, I am the chairman. At our last meeting, we voted to increase our pastor’s salary, give him a vacation of an extra month, and engage a substitute to take his place during July.”

Stephen still had the opinion that the information so far conveyed had no particular personal relation to himself. Mr. Sudbury removed the glove from his left hand, and placing the latter upon his left knee, leaned forward, and resumed :

“ At the last meeting of our Financial Committee, of which, as I have already informed you, I am chairman, I made a proposition which was accepted, and I was appointed a special committee of one to wait upon you and to request that you will occupy our pulpit during the month of July and fill the vacancy made necessary by Mr. Cartwright’s forced absence.”

“ I am greatly flattered by your offer,” said Stephen, “ but I regret that my present duties here will oblige me to decline.”

“ Decline ? ” said Mr. Sudbury, with a look approaching astonishment upon his face.

“Yes, positively decline,” said Stephen, firmly. “You are entitled to hear my reasons. For two years, I have laboured here in the slum district. I have gathered about me a small congregation, who look to me for guidance and assistance at any hour of the day or night. Having induced them to come here, I should not feel that I had any right whatever to neglect them.”

“Do you have a morning service?” asked Mr. Sudbury.

“No,” replied Stephen. “I tried to have one for awhile, but was obliged to give it up. Worn out with the toil of the week, my people are not early risers. Then, they have to put on their Sunday clothes, such as have them, and I found that an afternoon service at three, lasting an hour, and one in the evening at eight, also lasting an hour, secured the best attendance.”

“That will do exactly,” remarked Mr. Sudbury. “We have only one service, lasting, as a rule, from half past ten to twelve. You can easily reach your chapel in time to attend your regular service here.”

Stephen thought for a moment, and he then said: “Under these circumstances I will consider the matter.”

“Let us consider it now,” said Mr. Sudbury. “The remuneration for your services will be —” and he named a figure many times larger than

Stephen would have ventured to fix for them. "In addition, at the last meeting of our Financial Committee, Mr. Lempster, our treasurer, made a motion, which was adopted, that the proceeds of the collections taken during the month of July should be devoted to the Bethany Mission Chapel."

Again Stephen pondered. Here was an opportunity to add a large sum to his income, which would give him many books which he desired to own and some few personal comforts that he absolutely needed, but which he had not felt that he could afford. Then again, the collections would, undoubtedly, be large, and with the sum thus obtained, he could do more than ever for his parishioners and those who attended the social gatherings. Then he thought of the short time for preparation, but that mattered little.

"I will accept your proposition, Mr. Sudbury, with one provision. I must preach in my own way. I have become so accustomed to speaking to the people who come to the Mission that I cannot change my mode of address to suit a new congregation."

"You can say what you wish," said Mr. Sudbury, "of course, keeping within denominational lines."

"I will agree not to cover any wider ground in my discourse than our Master did," was the somewhat vague promise made by the young clergyman.

"Then we will consider the matter settled," remarked Mr. Sudbury. He took a note-book from his pocket. "By the way, your full name is —"

"Stephen Holton."

"Ah! have you any middle name?"

"Yes, Mayhew, my mother's maiden name."

"Ah! Mayhew. Stephen Mayhew Holton," said Mr. Sudbury, as he wrote the name in his note-book. "We are to be congratulated on having secured your valuable services, Mr. Holton."

Stephen bowed his acknowledgment of the compliment. Then Mr. Sudbury carefully drew on his glove, took up his hat, scrutinising it carefully to see if a speck of dust had adhered to it, then placed it upon his head with great deliberation. Then he took up his gold-headed cane.

"Good morning, Mr. Holton. I shall look forward, with great interest, to the hearing of your sermons."

When the door closed, Stephen's first impulse was to run after him and say that he had changed his mind. He reached the door and had his hand upon the handle, then he turned and walked back to the desk. "How foolish I am!" thought he. "I left the little country town because I felt that the field I occupied was not broad enough. Now, the same feeling oppresses me here and yet I am not honest enough to avow it. I look forward to a broader

field than is supplied by this little chapel. Why cannot I be content to be an humble servant? Well, I will do the best I can. I know not what the outcome will be. Perhaps, after all, it is not my own weak inclinations, but the hand of the Lord that is guiding me."

The Saturday morning papers announced that the Rev. Robert Livingstone Cartwright, pastor of the Riverside Avenue Church, would sail on the first of July to make a visit to the Holy Land and, at the same time, to benefit his health, which had been somewhat impaired by his close attention to his pastoral duties; and that, during his absence, his pulpit would be filled by the Rev. Stephen Mayhew Holton, pastor of the Bethany Mission Chapel. Stephen smiled when he read the announcement. "The boys round here call me Steve Holton. What a big man the Reverend Stephen Mayhew Holton will be to-morrow, when he occupies the pulpit of the Riverside Avenue Church."

On Sunday, as the young clergyman stood in the pulpit, he was both gratified and surprised as he gazed upon the large congregation which had assembled. Singing, reading from the Scriptures, the prayer, and more singing followed in the usual order. Mr. Sudbury had supplied him with a written statement showing the usual order of services. Stephen stepped from behind the pulpit and

walked to the table, upon which were the silver plates in which the contributions were taken up. The organist resumed his seat and the tones of the beautiful instrument soon filled the great church. The deacons came forward and stood before the table. Then Stephen spoke:

“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him. For God loveth a cheerful giver. Freely ye have received, freely give.”

Stephen returned to the pulpit. While the deacons were attending to their accustomed duties, he read several notices of the meetings of several auxiliary societies connected with the church. While so engaged, he could not help hearing the clink of silver and the rustle of bills, and the thought came to him, “All this can be used to benefit those who live in my little vineyard. How ungrateful it was of me to be discontented with my work and to yearn for wider fields of action.”

Then the young clergyman advanced to the front of the platform, evidently disdaining to remain behind the pulpit or confine himself to notes. His discourse was free from all oratory, vigorous and convincing. He took for the foundation of his sermon a text which, though not found in the Scriptures, he maintained was constantly implied there, “Thou shalt not become a glutton.”

This text he had divided into four parts, each to be considered in its order on the four Sundays he was to speak: "Thou shalt not become a glutton for drink, luxury, woman, or gold." He then spoke on his first subject, "Drink."

"Intemperance," said Stephen, in part, "is the sick man of our nation. Religion and law have both failed to cure him, and now, in my opinion, the nation, the State, and the community should consult over this case.

"The nation should provide against the manufacture of adulterated liquors, the State should allow the voters of license towns to vote on the question of open bars (in my opinion, the root of the whole evil), and the community should encourage that self-respect in man which will lead him to give up the habit of intemperance."

As a means to this end, he spoke of the forming of anti-treating clubs, and told his hearers of his own Mission Club, which he endeavoured to have contain the social features of the saloon, without its demoralising traits.

"And now," he concluded, "let us join in the prayer that the hand of God will aid our nation, State, and community in their efforts to banish the bar and close its doors for ever!"

Then Stephen pronounced the benediction, and to the music of the great organ the congregation

left the church. Many, however, remained to introduce themselves to the young clergyman and to compliment him upon the success of his first sermon, which they declared simple, practical, and stirring. Mr. Sudbury in particular was effusive in his expressions of congratulation.

"An excellent talk, Mr. Holton," he declared oracularly, "although not exactly applicable to the members of our congregation. Still, as the greater part of it will be in the papers, it will, I trust, have its effect upon that class to whom it more particularly applies." And he moved away, to make room for other well-wishers.

When Stephen reached the pastor's room, he found a man, clad in a sober livery, who conveyed him an invitation to dinner that day from Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lempster.

Stephen hesitated for a moment. He had preached in the temple of wealth. Why not break bread in one of their mansions? He bowed his acquiescence and, following the man, entered the waiting carriage, which was whirled swiftly onward, for, although Mr. Lempster lived on Riverside Avenue, the location of his house was more than a mile distant from the church.

As Stephen stepped from the carriage, he looked up at the Lempster mansion. Yes, surely it deserved the name. As he entered the vestibule, he

saw that a wide hallway occupied the centre of the house, with rooms opening upon it from either side. He was shown into what he supposed was the sitting-room. He was left alone for some moments, during which time he carefully scrutinised the room and its furnishings. It had a home-like look. Everything looked rich, even luxurious, but there was no glare, no tinsel, no garish surroundings.

Suddenly a door was opened and a gentleman, between fifty and sixty years of age, leaning heavily upon two canes, entered. He wore a pair of slippers, and his slow and laborious movement indicated that he was suffering from some painful physical ailment. The gentleman did not speak until after he had reached an easy-chair, when he turned to Stephen and said: "My name is Henry Lempster, and I presume I address the Reverend Stephen Holton."

Stephen bowed and grasped the hand which Mr. Lempster extended to him.

"When I retired last night," said Mr. Lempster, "I fully intended to be present at church this morning and listen to your sermon, but this morning I found that I was the victim of one of my old lumbago attacks."

At that moment Mrs. Lempster entered and was duly presented. Stephen said to himself: "It is to this lady that the taste and refinement here displayed are due." Her face had that look of in-

telligence which comes from the combination of education and experience.

"My wife," continued Mr. Lempster, "did not deem it advisable for me to venture out, even in my carriage, and, although I advised her to attend the service, she would not leave me."

A general conversation followed, which was broken in upon by the call to dinner. As Stephen entered the dining-room, he saw that the educated taste, which had given the sitting-room such an attractive look, extended also to the dining-room, and undoubtedly was apparent in every part of the mansion. The table fittings were abundant, but not redundant. A serving-man, who combined the vocations of butler, steward, and waiter, stood ready to attend to their wants. They had hardly seated themselves at the table when the door opened and a young man, apparently about twenty-five years of age, entered the room. As he saw Mr. Holton, he stopped suddenly.

"Allow me to present my only son, Charles — the Reverend Mr. Holton."

"I have had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Holton before," said Charles Lempster, as he bowed his acknowledgment of the introduction.

"Upon what occasion?" asked Stephen, the young man's face being unfamiliar to him.

Charlie, who had taken his seat, replied: "At

church, this morning, when I had the pleasure of listening to your discourse; and that discourse," he continued, looking first toward his father and then toward his mother, "must be my apology for being late at dinner. I got into an animated discussion on the subject of temperance with my friend, Chester Lethbridge — "

"An old college chum of Charlie's," interpolated Mr. Lempster.

"And I became so interested that I didn't notice that time was passing away so quickly."

"Oh, it is all right, Charlie," said his mother; "we had just taken our seats."

"Then the sermon was on the subject of intemperance," said Mr. Lempster. "Are you a teetotaler, Mr. Holton?"

"I am not a total abstainer," replied Stephen, "but I am a temperance man. I do not say that I should not under any circumstances take a glass of liquor, but it would not be unless it were needed imperatively."

"Then you will not have a glass of wine?" asked Mr. Lempster.

"No, thank you."

"Shall Bartholomew fill your glass, Charlie?"

"No, father, I prefer a bottle of that effervescent lithia to wine, as an aid to digestion."

"Don't you consider that wine aids digestion?" asked Mr. Lempster, turning to Stephen.

"Logically," replied the latter, "I do not see how it can. I know that is the generally received opinion, but popular impressions are not always correct. You know that alcohol is used as a preservative. Now, wine is largely composed of alcohol. Why should not the alcohol in it, when taken into the stomach, exert its usual properties and tend to retard digestion rather than aid it?"

"I shall have to speak to Doctor Forbush about that," said Mr. Lempster. "Perhaps my wine drinking is the cause of my continued attacks of lumbago."

"Doctor Forbush will not advise you to stop drinking wine," said Charlie, with a laugh. Looking at Stephen, he said: "The doctor's son is an importer and wholesale dealer in wines, and father is one of his best customers."

"Well," said Mr. Lempster, "I shall speak to the doctor, anyway. By the way, Charles, you mentioned young Lethbridge a few moments ago. How is he now?"

"In fine health and spirits. His lean years of business are over, and he's beginning to prosper."

"I'm glad of that," remarked Mrs. Lempster; "Chester is a fine steady fellow, and a great favourite of mine."

"Then you'll be pleased to know," rejoined her son, "that he and I are to spend our vacation to-

gether, beginning next Saturday. He's looking up some place in Maine which seems to attract him, and is going to let me know about it in a day or two."

"I hope you'll enjoy yourselves," Mr. Lempster observed. Then he turned to Stephen and the talk became general during the rest of the dinner. The little party had scarcely left the table when the clock struck two.

"Really," said Stephen, "I must apologise to you for doing as they do in the country, eat and run, for I have certain preparations to make at the chapel before the services, which begin promptly at three."

Mrs. Lempster and Charles accompanied their guest to the vestibule, and despite his illness, Mr. Lempster accompanied them.

"Good-bye, Mr. Holton," said Mrs. Lempster, cordially. "I trust that this visit will not be your last."

"So do I," added Charles, "I am anxious to hear more about your Mission Social Club, in which you have interested me greatly."

"If you will come down to my chapel in Mission Place some evening, you can see the club for yourself," replied Stephen. "And I shall be very glad, Mrs. Lempster, to visit you again."

The courtesy of the Lempsters did not end at the front door. As Stephen reached the top step,

he saw that the carriage was still standing there with the door invitingly open. He entered and was driven rapidly through the broad avenues, back to the narrow streets and lanes. Stephen advised the driver to stop at the corner of Mission Place and Minton Street, as the latter was too narrow a place to allow the carriage to be turned around, and to back out for so long a distance would have been uncomfortable, both for the driver and the high-spirited and restive horses.

"That is a happy home," said Stephen to himself, as he sat in the carriage. Then he recalled the words in the Bible, "A wise son maketh a glad father," and thought to himself: "What an exemplary young man Charles Lempster is. I am glad that I asked him to come down to the chapel some evening. I may be able to interest him in my mission work."

"How well Charlie appeared to-day," said Mr. Lempster to his wife, who gave a smiling acquiescence, as they returned to the sitting-room.

Yes, Charles Lempster had appeared well that day. He had been to church to hear their guest preach; had turned down his glass at dinner, and had shown an apparently sincere interest in the young clergyman's work.

As the door closed on his parents, the young man yawned slightly, and then took out his watch.

“Quarter past two. The boys said they would get in about three o’clock. I will walk down to the hotel.”

A few moments later and he had left the house.

CHAPTER IV.

"THE ROAD TO RUIN."

IN a back room on the upper floor of the Trimountain House, five young men were seated. Although it was Sunday afternoon, four of them were engaged in playing cards. Their names were Rudolph Neaves, Harry Conway, Jim Travers, and Bert May. The fifth one of the party, Will Hart, was seated in an easy chair, smoking a cigarette and lazily sipping a glass of champagne, which stood upon a table near him. The door was suddenly flung open and Charles Lempster entered. As he closed it, he said: "Hallo, boys! Sorry if I have kept you waiting, but dad had a parson to dinner with him, and, of course, I had to do the agreeable. That's why I'm late."

"I presume," said Rudolph Neaves, in the cool, deliberate manner characteristic of him, "that if you had had the devil for a guest, we should not have seen you at all this afternoon."

"As I was unable to secure the company of that gentleman," replied Charlie, "I did the next best thing and came down here to see you."

There was a loud laugh at this sally and Jim Travers said: "You can't get ahead of Charlie."

The game was not finished, so Charlie drew a chair up close to the table and watched the play.

"I see you have been having your usual luck," said he, glancing at the pile of chips which lay on the table in front of Rudolph.

"I beg your pardon," replied Rudolph, "the money I win at cards is the result of scientific playing."

"Well, Neaves, your science is too much for me," said Bert May, rising from his chair. "I am cleaned down to my last dollar and I sha'n't get my allowance for a week. Charlie, take my place and see if you can stem the tide."

Charlie took out his pocketbook and extracted a ten-dollar bill and said: "Pay me when your ship comes in."

Bert muttered his thanks and stuffed the bill into his pocket.

"Now," said Lempster, as he took his seat opposite Rudolph, "we'll see what luck will do against scientific playing. By the way, Rudolph, I will wager you a fiver that luck will come out ahead."

The wager was taken and the stakes were deposited in the hands of Hart, who had finished his cigarette and had refilled his champagne glass.

“Now, Rudolph, I am going to reduce that pile of yours. By the way, boys, what have you got to drink? I had a couple down at the bar before I came up.”

“There is about half a bottle of champagne left,” replied Will Hart.

“Well, have up some brandy, and cigars. Here’s the money for it.”

In a short time the brandy was brought, the bottle opened, cigars passed around, and then Charlie filled a tumbler half full of the fiery liquor and tossed it down at a gulp.

“You must have a copper-lined throat,” said Conway.

“Never touched my throat,” replied Charlie. “Went straight down without hitting anywhere.”

This caused a hearty laugh from most of the boys, but Rudolph smiled a little disdainfully and Will Hart drawled out: “When a man can’t be satisfied with anything but brandy, it is about time to order his coffin.”

The play proceeded with varying success to the four participants for some time. Finally one of the jack-pots grew, by large and small additions, until its contents amounted to fully one hundred dollars. Harry Conway and Jim Travers showed their hands, but they had no show to win, for Rudolph laid down three aces.

"That is pretty good for scientific playing," said Charlie, "but luck wins." As he said this, he spread out his cards. Both Harry and Jim cried out: "A flush!"

"Yes, a flush and a good one, too," cried Charlie, as he quickly turned the cards face downward upon the top of the pack.

"Beg your pardon, Lempster," said Neaves, "I would like to look at those cards again."

While the playing had been going on, Charlie had taken three more drinks of brandy. His face was now flushed and there was a glittering look in his eye which showed that the potent liquor had mounted to his head.

"What's the matter, Neaves?" he said, in a somewhat surly tone. "Can't you tell a flush when you see it?"

"Yes," he replied coolly. "I can tell a flush when I see it, but I can't easily tell one when I don't see it."

"What do you mean?" asked Charlie, sharply.

"I mean just this," said Rudolph. "I have an idea, which spreading those cards out again will either prove to be true or incorrect, that one of those cards was a diamond instead of a heart."

"He has a right to see them," remarked Bert May, who was standing behind Rudolph.

"Hold your tongue," cried Charlie, angrily.

“You are out of the game. Outsiders have no business to give advice to players.”

Charlie took the cards somewhat reluctantly from the top of the pack and spread them out. Yes, Rudolph’s statement was correct. What had appeared to be a two of hearts was in reality a two of diamonds, and Charlie’s hand was worth absolutely nothing.

“I think I will rake in this jack-pot,” said Neaves, “and my advice to you, Lempster, is not to turn your cards down quite so quickly in the future. A good hand is worth a longer inspection,” he added, sarcastically.

“By the way you speak,” said Charlie, “any one would think I knew that was a diamond instead of a heart.”

“I never said so,” replied Rudolph.

The last drink of brandy that Charlie had taken was even more potent than the two that had preceded it. He felt dizzy and lost command of himself.

“Thinking a thing is sometimes as bad as saying it,” he snarled. “I say, Rudolph, I don’t think that was fair. You ought to tell the boys that you think I was square and that you have no idea that I intended to cheat you.”

“Whenever I feel that way,” said the imperturbable Rudolph, “I shall be glad to tell the boys.”

"What do you mean by that, Neaves?" cried Charlie. "Do you mean to insinuate that I intended to cheat you?"

"What I have said," replied Rudolph, "is not open to that interpretation. What I think is nobody's business."

"Well," cried Charlie, now losing command of himself entirely, "if you think that I intended to cheat you and haven't backbone enough to say it, you are no gentleman, and you are as big a liar as you would be if you did say it."

Rudolph looked up into Charlie's inflamed face and said, coolly: "I see it is now a question as to which one of us has got the most backbone. Well, I will show mine first. Lempster, I think that you knew that was a diamond and you did intend to cheat me."

"You're a liar," cried Charlie.

"That is a word," replied Neaves, "that I allow no human being, whether he is a gentleman or only thought to be one, to apply to me."

Raising a glass of brandy, which had been filled for him, but which had remained untasted, he threw the contents full in Lempster's face. With a cry of rage, almost like that of a wild animal, Charlie put his hand to his hip pocket, drew out a revolver, cocked it, and before anybody could interfere, had fired. The wounded man struggled to his feet,

tipping over his chair as he did so, then fell helpless upon the floor. Charlie looked at the white face of his late antagonist and a cold tremor seemed to take possession of every limb. The pistol fell from his hands upon the table. He sank back into his chair and covered his face with his hands to shut out the sight.

There was an instant of horror-stricken silence. Then Hart, who was the first to recover himself, lifted Rudolph from the floor and placed him upon a lounge, which was in one corner of the room.

“Boys, I’m afraid he is done for,” said Hart, as he bent over Neaves’s white face and closed eyes. “See where the bullet hit him!”

He pointed to a blackened place upon the white vest which Rudolph wore.

“It’s a very bad place, for the doctors will probably be unable to find the bullet. That means Neaves will die of internal hemorrhage. Better give him some brandy, boys.”

The stimulant soon produced its effect, for Rudolph opened his eyes and glanced at the eager, anxious faces that were looking down upon him.

“Where’s Charlie?” he asked, in a thin voice.

All eyes were turned toward Lempster, who still sat in his chair with his hands over his eyes.

“Come here, Lempster,” said Will Hart, “Rudolph wants to speak to you.”

No one would have recognised in the haggard face, with its swollen eyes, the handsome young man who, a few hours previous, had sat at his father's table, and had refused a glass of wine. He advanced slowly toward Rudolph, who motioned with his hand for the others to stand aside.

"You didn't mean to do this, Charlie," Rudolph gasped. "It was the drink. Perhaps I am done for, and perhaps I may come out of it all right, but, if I die, Charlie, do one thing for my sake. Stop drinking. Now, you had better get away from here at once. If anybody asks you anything about me, say I was all right when you saw me last."

Without a word in reply to what Rudolph had said, Charles Lempster grasped his hat and left the room.

Then Rudolph beckoned for the others to approach him.

"Now, all of you boys go at once by the rear door, so that none of the hotel people will see you on their way up, as they may be here any minute. Charlie will tell a straight story, and all you fellows must back him up. Say that the last time you saw me, I was all right. Good-bye."

With whitened faces, Harry, Bert, and Jim left the room. As Will Hart started to go, his eye caught sight of the pistol, which still lay upon the table. He took it and, carrying it to Rudolph,

unclasped the fingers of his right hand, and placed the butt of the pistol within it. The wounded man tightened his grasp upon it. Then he opened his eyes and, looking up at Hart, whispered: “Will, you have got more sense than all the others put together. I can trust you to straighten things out whichever way they turn.”

Stephen conducted the services at the three o'clock meeting and the evening service from eight to nine. There was a large audience and it was with a sigh of relief that he threw himself into his old-fashioned rocking-chair, when he reached his room. It had been an arduous day, and a rest was welcome to him.

Suddenly there came a loud knock at the door, and a messenger boy entered with a letter. The note sheet was headed “Emergency Hospital,” and read as follows:

“We have a young fellow here at the hospital who attempted suicide this afternoon. He is sinking fast and I do not think will live much longer. He expressed a desire to see a clergyman, and I thought of you. Come at once or it will be too late.

“EDWARD GLINES,
“*House Physician.*”

In a quarter of an hour, Stephen reached the hospital and was shown into the ward in which lay the dying man. A gentleman sat beside his bed, busily engaged in writing at a small table.

"Mr. Tillinghast, let me make you acquainted with the Reverend Mr. Holton. Mr. Tillinghast is a lawyer," continued Doctor Glines, "whom I called in to take this man's deposition."

"It is now ready for signing," said the lawyer. "I shall read it over in your presence and have you witness it. I would suggest that the nurse give Mr. Neaves some stimulant, as he will hardly be able to sign his name without it."

In a few moments, the dying man opened his eyes and looked inquiringly at his visitors.

"This is the Reverend Mr. Holton, a clergyman," said Mr. Tillinghast. "Now I will read the deposition.

"This is to certify that I, Rudolph Neaves, student, being sound in mind though weak in body, and lying at the point of death, declare this to be a true and complete statement of the cause that led to my present condition. In company with five of my fellow students and friends, I was engaged in playing cards this afternoon in a room in a well-known hotel. I was unlucky at the game and lost all my money. After my companions had gone, I fell into a state of despondency over my losses, for

I have some bills coming due this week that I had promised to pay, and, while in this state, I shot myself. I make this statement of my own free will in order to remove from my companions any blame and to free them from any charges which may be brought against them for alleged complicity in my death.’”

At the bottom of the document, the lawyer added the usual form of oath. The dying man was lifted up by the nurse and a little table moved close to the bed, so that he could sign the deposition, and Stephen attached his name to the paper as witness. The exertion told strongly upon the little remaining strength of the dying man and he fell back upon the pillows exhausted. The nurse administered some more stimulant. The lawyer started to leave the room. “There is no doubt,” said he, “but the man will die, but I will retain this paper in my possession until Doctor Glines informs me of his death. It will then be my duty to place it in the hands of the medical examiner for this district.”

Rudolph once more opened his eyes and, by a sign, indicated that he wished the nurse and the doctor to leave the room, which they did.

“I have sent for you,” said Rudolph, “because I wish to tell the truth before I die.”

Stephen looked at him. “What do you mean?” he asked. “Have you not told the truth in the paper that you just signed?”

“No.”

“Why did you sign it then?” asked Stephen. “Do you wish to go before your Maker with a lie upon your lips?”

“No,” replied Rudolph, “that is why I sent for you. He didn’t mean to do it. Char—I mean the one who shot me was drunk at the time and didn’t know what he was doing. He is a fine fellow when he is sober, and I signed that paper to save him. I sent for you because I wanted to tell you the truth and save my soul from perdition.”

The man was too weak to say any more and Stephen knew that it would be useless to question him any further, so he sank upon his knees beside the bed and prayed long and earnestly for the man, who, in the hour of death, had sworn falsely in order to save the man who had shot him from receiving the just punishment due for his crime. While Stephen was praying, the soul of Rudolph Neaves had passed away.

CHAPTER V.

“CROWNER’S QUEST.”

THE instinct of self-preservation is strong in every one. When Charles Lempster left the room at the Trimountain House, his first act was to wipe away as well as he could the brandy which had been thrown upon him, and to button up his coat to conceal the stains which he could not remove. Leaving the hotel by the rear door, he hailed a passing coupé, and was driven to a private room which he rented in a quarter of the city far removed from his home. There he changed his clothes, and a few hours later sat down to supper with his parents, as natural in his manner, and apparently as exemplary in his habits, as he had been when he took dinner with them and their guest, the Rev. Stephen Holton.

The next morning he rose early, and, leaving a message to his father and mother that he would breakfast in the city with a friend whom he expected on an early train, walked over to his club.

He found the club room untenanted when he

arrived there. Calling for a cocktail, and ordering his breakfast, he told the waiter to serve it in one of the private dining-rooms, and to bring him the morning papers at once. On the first page of the first one he took up, he saw in big type these words :

“DETERMINED SUICIDE.—A Harvard student takes his own life.—Lost all his money at play.—Came from the West and had no relatives here.—The case in charge of the medical examiner.”

Charlie read no more, but turned the paper face downward upon the table. What should he do next? He did not know which way to proceed. He was dazed and bewildered; his head swam, and he grew faint. His breakfast was brought in, but he had no appetite. He rang the bell, intending to order another cocktail, but when the waiter appeared, Charles saw that some one accompanied him.

“Hallo, Will,” he cried, as Hart entered the room. “Glad to see you. Sit down and have some breakfast. I can’t eat a mouthful. Waiter, bring in a couple of cocktails.”

The waiter obeyed, and then withdrew.

“I suppose you know he is dead,” began Will.

“Yes, I saw it in the paper.”

“I see that the news has affected your break-

fast. The whole thing was a wretched business. Rudolph was unnecessarily sarcastic, and you were ugly, as you always are when you are drunk, Charlie.”

“You are not very complimentary, Hart.”

“I don’t think the occasion is one that calls for compliments, but don’t let us waste our time, Lempster. I judged that Rudolph was going to have it appear that he killed himself from what he said to you and the others, and so I had better coach you fellows up, so that your stories will agree.”

“What have you done?” asked Charlie, feeling that perhaps, after all, this plain-spoken young man might prove to be his best friend.

“In the first place, when I saw that you had all of you lost your heads, I made up my mind to keep my wits about me. I did three things before I left the room, for which all of you fellows ought to be grateful to me.”

“What, for instance?”

“Well, I saw the pistol on the table. It occurred to me that a man would not be likely to shoot himself in the abdomen, put the pistol back on the table, then walk over to the lounge and dispose himself comfortably thereon. So I took the pistol and put it in his hand, so as to give some semblance of truth to his story. The second thing I did was

to gather up the cards and put them in my pocket. And the third was to pick up the money that I found on the table and take it with me."

"How much was there?"

"One hundred and fifteen dollars, a very comfortable jack-pot."

"What do you intend to do with the money? It doesn't belong to you."

"I know it doesn't," remarked Hart, "but I propose to keep it until the rightful owner claims it. By the way, Lempster, you don't consider that you have any lien on it? That two spot of diamonds rather cancelled your rights in the matter."

Charlie's face flushed red with vexation, but he made no reply.

There was a moment's pause, then Hart queried, "Have you got your story all ready?"

"Yes," replied the other, "Bob Cartwright, who is staying at the hotel, and whom I know was out of town yesterday, told me he had a book up in his room that I wished to borrow. I will testify that I went up to get the book. Then I will say that I met you in the corridor and you told me that some of the boys were up-stairs in Room 256. It will appear perfectly natural for me to go up and look in. Then you all stick to it that I refused to play and went out, and that frees me entirely."

"That's a plausible story; and I have it all

jotted down in my memory. Now I will run out to the college to find the boys and coach them up so that their stories will tally with yours.”

During the conversation Will Hart, whose appetite had evidently not been affected by his participation in the wretched affair, had eaten the breakfast prepared for Charlie.

“Well, good-bye, Charlie,” he said, as he arose to take his departure. “Stick to your story, and if they ask you any unexpected questions, don’t hesitate to answer quickly. At an inquest, the man who hesitates is lost. There will be some sharp lawyer there nosing for points, and he will watch every one of you as a cat does a mouse. If you will be up in your private room about seven this evening, I will drop in and tell you how matters stand.”

The inquest was held by the medical examiner on the body of Rudolph Neaves on Tuesday morning at nine o’clock. The names of those present in Room 256 on Sunday afternoon had been obtained by the officers from the manager of the hotel and they were all notified to appear at the inquest. The verdict was that Rudolph Neaves came to his death from a pistol-shot, the wound being inflicted with his own hand, and no blame was attached to any other person. News of his death was sent to his uncle, who lived in a small town in the State of

Indiana. A reply came by telegram to forward the body by express, as his uncle was in too feeble health to attempt so long a journey. So Rudolph Neaves, who had the making of a great and noble man in him, but who became, instead, the victim of a drunken quarrel, was laid away to rest in the quiet churchyard in a little country town; and, in the daily rush of mighty events, the tragedy was soon forgotten.

Stephen was somewhat surprised that he was not summoned to appear at the inquest. Nevertheless, he was gratified at not being further connected with the sad affair, for he thought to himself that some questions might have been asked him likely to have provoked a conflict between his sense of truth and the promise of secrecy which had been virtually imposed upon him by the dying man. One of the participants in the game of cards must have caused his death, but which one?

The next morning, impelled by a curiosity he could not restrain, Stephen called upon Mr. Tillinghast, the lawyer. After the ordinary courtesies were exchanged, he inquired whether Mr. Tillinghast had been present at the inquest.

"Oh, yes," said the lawyer. "I was obliged to give my testimony in regard to the deposition. I explained to the medical examiner that you were called simply in your capacity as spiritual adviser

and that I had asked you, as a favour, to witness the document. He decided that it would not be necessary to send for you.”

“Judging from the evidence given, what is your opinion?” Stephen ventured to inquire.

“Have you no suspicions?” asked the lawyer, looking at Stephen from under his corrugated eyebrows.

“To speak frankly, I have,” the clergyman replied.

“So have I,” the lawyer rejoined, “but the deposition of the dying man removes all chance for conviction, even though we knew the name of the criminal. I followed the testimony closely. It was evident that the boys had been taught, parrot-like, to tell their stories, and they did very well. Lempster came out scot-free. There was no evidence to show that he took any hand in the game or did any more than stay a few minutes to exchange greetings with the boys. One witness, Will Hart, I think his name was, swore positively that Lempster was not in the room more than five minutes.”

“Who won the money from Neaves?”

“Will Hart,” replied the lawyer. “He told the examiner that he won nearly five hundred dollars, the greater part of it from Neaves.”

“Will they be prosecuted for playing cards on Sunday?” asked Stephen.

"If they are," the lawyer replied, "they will pay their fines, and that will be the end of it."

"Will the college authorities take any action?"

Mr. Tillinghast laughed. "If the college authorities undertake the task of becoming sponsors for the actions of their students on evenings and Sundays, they will find that they have a bigger contract on hand than the government of the United States. No, I think we have heard the last of the affair."

As Stephen walked from Mr. Tillinghast's office, he pondered over what had just been said. Could it be possible that Charles Lempster was responsible for the death of Rudolph Neaves? What proof had he of this? Only that the dying man had said "Char—" but had not finished pronouncing the name. When Stephen reached his study, he looked over a pile of newspapers on his writing-table and found the one which contained the account of the inquest. The names of those examined were mentioned in the article: Harry Conway, James Travers, Albert May, William Hart, and Charles Lempster. There was only one name in which "Char" formed part of either the Christian or proper name. Yes, from a circumstantial point of view that seemed conclusive, but what good would it do even if he should feel impelled, from his sense of Christian duty and from the duty that he owed to his fellow citizens,

to disclose his impressions to the officers of the law? He would be met, first, by the deposition of the dying man, and, next, by the united testimony of the five who were present at the time of the affair, who would undoubtedly adhere strictly to their previous statements. No, he could do nothing, but from that moment his feelings toward Charles Lempster underwent a complete change.

CHAPTER VI.

“THOU SHALT NOT BECOME A GLUTTON.”

THE next day, the pompous Mr. Sudbury visited the Mission Chapel. He reiterated his congratulatory remarks of the previous Sunday, referred several times to the pleasure that the Financial Committee, of which he was chairman, had taken in Mr. Holton's sermon, and wound up his call with an invitation for Stephen to dine with him the following Sunday.

Shortly afterward a new visitor appeared, a reporter on one of the leading dailies, who had chanced to report Stephen's sermon. He told the young clergyman that not only his editor, but many readers as well, had declared that discourse to be the best thing of its kind ever printed, and wished a full report of the three talks to come. “This will make a name for you, Mr. Holton,” said the reporter, “and if your other three sermons are as good as this, I advise you to publish them in book form.”

The following Sunday the Rev. Stephen Holton

took for his text: “Thou shalt not become a glutton for the love of luxury.” During his discourse, he noticed that Mr. Sudbury and his wife occupied a pew not far from the front. After the service, they joined him in the pastor’s room, and the three walked home together, for the Sudbury house was but one block from the church, being located on a fashionable street running at right angles to Riverside Avenue. When Stephen entered Mr. Sudbury’s house, he became at once aware of the fact that there was a marked difference between the unostentatious elegance which pervaded the Lempster mansion and the theatrical appearance which met the gaze at the very doorway of Mr. Sudbury’s house. Tinsel was on everything. There was no air of home comfort. The apartments looked more like the rooms of a fashionable parlour of a hotel than like the home of an intelligent and educated family.

In the dining-room, the same obtrusive display of wealth was apparent. There were but three at the table, but, nevertheless, two servants were present to attend to their wants. The Sudburys were what is known as high liver. Every delicacy of the season found its way to their table, and at a time when prices were the highest. Although Stephen had inveighed against that very luxury which was apparent on every hand in the Sudbury

house, and although Mr. Sudbury and his wife had been present and listened to the discourse, not a word was said during the dinner which indicated that the discourse had appealed to their feelings or had affected them in any way. Stephen was pleased with the reflection that the marked abstinence from referring to his sermon was undoubtedly due to the fact that the effect had gone home, but whether it would produce any reformation was doubtful.

Throughout the meal the subject of discussion was money and what money could buy. Stephen had little opportunity to take part in the conversation, but he was a good listener and learned incidentally that Mr. Sudbury's business had been more than usually profitable during the past year. A patent that he had purchased for a song from a poor inventor, who was hard up for money, was likely to prove a mine of wealth. Mrs. Sudbury also had considerable money in her own right.

Mr. Solomon Sudbury dwelt with considerable satisfaction upon the fact that he had paid an unusually high price for many of the delicacies which formed part of the meal, and Mrs. Sudbury supplied the information that, after trying in vain to secure a competent family cook, they had decided to employ a male chef, and the dinner which they were enjoying was the result of his culinary skill.

"Of the earth, earthy," was Stephen's inward

comment, as he listened to the worldly conversation of the couple of whom he was the guest.

As soon as possible after dinner, Stephen excused himself, pleading that his presence at the chapel was absolutely necessary some time before the service began. He felt surfeited, and it was with a feeling of relief, when he reached the sidewalk, that he inhaled the fresh air, free from poisoned perfume, and looked up to the blue sky above him.

As he stood upon the platform of the chapel and surveyed his little congregation, most of them poorly dressed and some of them actually squalid in appearance, the difference between this picture and the one within the walls of the Sudbury house came plainly to his mind, and yet he preferred this picture to the other. Although this had a plain wooden frame, while the other was encased in a wide expanse of gold, yet one was painted in natural colours, — the other was full of ostentatious faults.

The evening service being over, he sought his room. He spent some time in classifying a large accumulation of letters and papers that had collected on his reading-table during the past week. To his surprise, at the bottom of the pile, he found an unopened letter, which, evidently, had escaped his attention. He looked at the postmark, “North Gayville, Maine.” The place was unknown to him.

The writer evidently was not, for a smile lighted up his face as he read the following:

“BROTHER HOLTON:—Although I am located away up here in the northern part of the good old State of Maine, newspapers reach me, and I have learned from them that you are making quite a stir in the big city. I have read your sermon on intemperance, and hope to read the others in due time. When your pastorate is over, and the dog-days arrive, you will yearn for clear skies and cooling breezes. We have these desirable acquisitions in large quantities in this little town, and my object in writing you is to ask you, for old acquaintance sake, to bid adieu to your labours for a month, at least, and spend it with me. During the day, I can promise you many physical enjoyments, and we will pass the evening in moral and spiritual communings.

“Anticipating your immediate acceptance of my invitation, I remain,

“Yours in F., L., and T.,

“O. P.”

Without a moment's hesitation, Stephen drew his writing-pad toward him. His answer read:

“BROTHER OCK:—I am glad to learn your whereabouts, and that you are ministering to the

spiritual wants of the little community in which you reside.

“ I have no doubt it is a true paradise, and my first impulse was to accept your invitation, but the fact is that I have planted a vineyard in what is considered to be the worst slum district in this great city, and this little vineyard requires my constant attention; never more so than during the hot months, when the people are driven from their houses by the intense heat, and, having nothing to amuse them, are more apt than ever to become involved in family fights and drunken brawls.

“ I will see that you get copies of my discourses. The fact is, they are to be printed in book form, and I shall be pleased to send you a copy with the compliments of the author.

“ Yours fraternally,

“ STEPHEN HOLTON.”

The letter was addressed to the Rev. Octavius Peacock, North Gayville, Maine.

CHAPTER VII.

“MISS FROU-FROU.”

MR. HORATIO SKILTON, the third member of the Financial Committee of the Riverside Avenue Church, had inherited a large fortune when quite a young man and had lived a life of gentlemanly ease and leisure. He had a wife and three sons. The family lived in an old-fashioned, but very comfortable house. Though abundantly able to do so, they did not, as the saying is, put on style, and there was nothing ostentatious about their home or about themselves.

Mrs. Skilton was a worldly woman, as the word goes, and an air of levity pervaded the conversation of the members of the house when visitors were not present, which very often overleaped the bounds of polite decorum. This manner of conversation had been common to the older Mr. Skilton from his younger days, and it is no wonder that his sons were influenced by it. This spirit of levity, or jocularly, as they no doubt called it, was not apparent to their own observation but was often objectionable to others.

The Skilton family was more temperate in its habits than that of Mr. Sudbury, but, although the viands were not so varied, nor so expensive, nor so highly seasoned, they were accompanied by beer or wine, and, on some occasions, by even stronger beverages. During the cold weather, Mr. Horatio Skilton did not retire until he had had what he called his night-cap, a hot drink, largely alcoholic in its nature. It was one of the duties of the second girl, Stella Briggs, to prepare these hot potions for him, and it is not strange that, subjected to this constant temptation, she soon fell into the habit of preparing not only enough for one, but more than enough for two. Miss Stella Briggs was an independent young lady. She felt sure that she could obtain another position without trouble, and gave her employers to understand that she was not particular whether she retained her present one or not. She was well paid and dressed better than the average servant. When some jocular remark was addressed to her while waiting on the table, she would apparently resent it and would flounce out of the room, her silk-lined skirt or stiffly starched clothing making a swish or swirr as she departed.

The youngest son, on one occasion, after such an exhibition of mute resentment, remarked that “Miss Frou-Frou” was very independent. This

witticism struck the fancy of the elder Skilton and he laughed heartily at what he considered his son's wit. At the next meal, he applied the name to the young girl in the presence of the family, and they were all filled with merriment at her apparent indignation. From that time on, she was more often called by that name when spoken of or to than by her own name of Stella.

The third Sunday in July came. Stephen delivered his third discourse. It was a question requiring most delicate handling, for social questions involving the relation of the sexes are, in many circles, looked upon as tabooed subjects. But, despite the fact that the language used was suggestive rather than direct, he made his points in fully as impressive a manner as he had done on the two former occasions.

The usual invitation to dinner had reached him, and Stephen felt that, as he had invaded the inner sanctuaries of two members of the Financial Committee, there was no good reason why he should not continue the circuit. So the usual hour after the service found him the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Skilton.

It is probable that the character and calling of their guest had their influence upon his host and hostess and their children, for during the meal although several remarks were made which at-

tracted Stephen's attention by their freedom and the absence of social restraint, there were no marked violations of the ordinary rules of table or conversational etiquette.

The subjects considered embraced a wide range, covering politics, the policy of the government, industrial trusts and combinations, and the comparative value of collegiate and commercial education. Stephen was struck with the intelligence and aptness of the sons and thought that the Skiltons were a very entertaining family.

Stella Briggs had waited upon the table, and at one time stood waiting a call for her services in a pose so graceful that Stephen's eyes were drawn involuntarily toward her. What a pretty girl she was. Her form was slight, but well rounded. Her dress fitted her closely and was tastefully made and trimmed. Upon her head she wore a coquettish little cap, from underneath which her curly hair crept in little ringlets. Her eyes were of a peculiar violet-blue; but it was not her supple form, her pretty face, her curly hair, or her blue eyes that most attracted Stephen's attention. He had seen what others of less discernment would not have noticed. There was in the eyes a look of distrust and defiance. There was in the face certain hard lines which indicated that the paths in life which she had threaded had not always been pleasant ones.

For, as it seemed to Stephen, the first time in his life, the evening service at the chapel seemed unusually long and tedious, and he was actually glad when he regained his room and sat down in his old-fashioned rocking-chair to think. As he sat there, the vision came to him of the face of that beautiful girl, with curly hair, blue eyes, and a rosy flush of health upon her cheek. But why that look in her eyes and those lines upon her face? What did they mean? If she had lived in Schwelkers Court, Stephen said to himself that he would have soon learned her story and found out whether he could be of service to her. It seemed to him that she needed the advice of some wise counsellor, the assistance of some kind friend.

While Stephen, in the seclusion of his room, was wrestling with his thoughts, an exciting scene was taking place at Mr. Skilton's house. It was ten o'clock and the other members of the family had retired. Mr. Skilton was in the sitting-room, looking at the Sunday paper. The door was opened and Stella entered, bearing in her hand a goblet filled with the steaming liquid. It was a hot port wine negus, of which Mr. Skilton was very fond, and he assured his wife that nobody had ever made them so much to his taste as Stella. She placed the goblet upon the table beside her employer and quietly left the room.

When she reached the kitchen, she took another goblet from the table, filled it with the same liquor which she had carried to Mr. Skilton, and began to sip it. After she finished the glass she looked at the clock. It was half past ten. It was her custom to return to the sitting-room to get the empty goblet. The room was usually vacant on such occasions. Then she used to extinguish the gaslight in the sitting-room and the kitchen and go up-stairs to her own little room in the upper story.

But this time, when she entered the room, she saw that Mr. Skilton was still there.

“Please close the door, Stella,” he said, and she mechanically obeyed him. “Come here, Stella,” he requested, in a tone which was new to her.

“I came for the goblet, sir.”

“Well, come and get it,” he said, somewhat tartly. “You don’t expect me to get up and pass it to you, do you?”

A remark like this, spoken sharply, always developed Stella’s feeling of independence. With a swish of her clothes, she advanced rapidly to the table, took up the goblet, and turned to leave the room.

Starting from his chair, Mr. Skilton caught her about the waist, and drawing her toward him, before she could realise the situation and interpose any effectual resistance, he kissed her. Filled with

anger at the insult, Stella strove to free herself from his embrace. In the struggle, she dropped the goblet, which was broken into pieces. Freeing one hand, she struck Mr. Skilton a stinging blow in the face. Startled by this sudden and unexpected attack, he released his hold upon the girl, who, springing from him, ran from the apartment and up-stairs to her own room.

In the sitting-room, the astonished Mr. Skilton was passing, as the French say, a very bad quarter of an hour. The blow which Stella had given him had sent his gold-bowed spectacles across the room, he knew not where. He was very near-sighted, almost blind without them. Falling upon his hands and knees, he crept about in search of them. While so doing, he cut his hand quite severely with the fragments of the broken glass and was obliged to tie it up with his handkerchief. His search for the spectacles was fruitless and he was obliged to find his way up-stairs to his sleeping-room in his almost blind condition.

The next morning, when the cook came down-stairs, she found the gas burning brightly in the sitting-room and also in the kitchen. She went up-stairs and knocked at the door of Stella's room. There was no response. She opened it and looked in. Stella was not there. The frightened girl lost no time in communicating her strange discovery to

her mistress. The latter's keen sight discovered the gold-bowed glasses upon the sitting-room floor and she viewed with astonishment the broken fragments of the goblet.

Mr. Skilton did not take breakfast with his family that morning. He complained of a very bad headache and thought that he would remain in bed for an hour or so. His wife brought him a large bottle of eau de cologne and several linen handkerchiefs. Moistening one of them with the perfume, she placed it upon his aching forehead and then went down-stairs to breakfast with the family.

About half past eight something occurred which surprised Mrs. Skilton more than anything else which had taken place. It was a short note from Stella Briggs, and was brought by a teamster.

“MRS. SKILTON :—Please deliver my trunk, which is packed and locked, to the bearer. As I left without giving you notice, I expect and will receive no compensation for my last week's services. If you wish to know the reason for my sudden departure, ask your husband. He will probably give you a truthful account of what took place last evening.

“STELLA BRIGGS.”

Mrs. Skilton went at once to her husband's room.

“Horatio!” she cried, “I have a few questions

to ask you. Who left the gas burning last night in the sitting-room and the kitchen? Who broke the goblet and left the pieces on the sitting-room floor? How did you happen to leave your gold-bowed spectacles down-stairs? And what does this letter from Stella mean, sending for her trunk, and saying that you can tell why she left so suddenly?"

"Lucy," said the sufferer from headache, "you ask so many questions all at once, I shall have to answer them one at a time. I dropped the goblet and broke it. In attempting to pick up the pieces, I dropped my glasses and was unable to find them. I was so disturbed by these two occurrences that I neglected to put out the sitting-room light."

"Your explanation is very good, so far, but I thought Stella always put out the sitting-room light and the one in the kitchen before she went to bed."

"You are right, Lucy, she has always done so. Last night, there was a reason why she did not. When she came to get the goblet, as was her custom, I told her to close the door, as I wished to speak to her. Then I called her attention to the fact that upon several occasions I had found our youngest son talking with her and I suggested to her, in as fatherly a manner as possible, that such actions were prejudicial to family harmony."

"What did she say?" asked Mrs. Skilton, almost breathless with astonishment and surprise.

“Well, Lucy, she quite took my breath away with her reply. Instead of receiving my reproof in the friendly spirit in which it was offered, she virtually told me that it was none of my business; that the boy liked her and she liked him, and that she would do as she pleased.”

“The impudent hussy!” cried Mrs. Skilton, springing to her feet. “If you had told me of this when you came up-stairs, she should not have stayed in the house over night. What a designing creature she was, to be sure! Well, I will let the teamster have the trunk, and then I will go down to the intelligence office and see if I can get another girl, the homeliest one I can find. I don’t want any more pretty servant girls in my house.”

As she said this she left the room, slamming the door behind her.

“That was a pretty narrow escape,” soliloquised Mr. Skilton, as he moistened another handkerchief with cologne and pressed it upon his throbbing temples. “It would not do to have Lucy get suspicious. It would be so uncomfortable for her — and for me too.”

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE GOLDEN CALF."

THE morning after the dinner at Mr. Skilton's, as Stephen was sitting in his office, the door was opened and Phelps, the old soldier whom he had engaged to look after the chapel on Sunday mornings while he was away, looked in, and asked if he might have a few minutes' talk with him. Stephen bade him enter and take a seat. The old soldier did not seem to know just how to begin, so Stephen encouraged him by saying:

"Well, what is the matter, Phelps?"

"There's not much the matter so far, but I'm afraid there's trouble a-brewing."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Well, you see," said the old man, "I didn't say anything to you yesterday 'cause you had your meeting to attend to, but the fact is, yesterday afternoon, about two o'clock, Budd Moran and Terry Harrigan came into the chapel. They had never been there afore and I suspected they was up to some mischief. Sure enough, after Terry had

been there about ten minutes, he took out his pipe, lighted it, and began to smoke. I told him he could not smoke in the chapel, but he could go out in the yard. He told me he would smoke where he had a mind to, and if I didn't like it, I could lump it. I took hold of him to put him out, and then Budd Moran tackled me. They would have got the best of me if help had not come. Summers, the policeman, happened to be coming down Minton Street, and hearing the scuffling, he come in, and then Terry and Budd slunk off. I'm afraid there'll be more trouble next Sunday.”

“Oh, don't worry over that, Mr. Phelps. Next Sunday is the last one that I shall be away. As both of the fellows know that the police are acquainted with their actions, I don't think they will trouble you again, and, after next Sunday, I shall be here to look out for matters, myself. However, I will speak to Captain Smith at the station and ask him to have an officer close at hand, in case they mean mischief.”

Somewhat, but not entirely, reassured, the old soldier left the room, muttering to himself as he did so: “Them fellers never like to own up beat. It is known all through the district that they got left last Sunday, and the other members of the gang will poke fun at them till they get the best of me.”

Stephen's fourth and last discourse drew the

largest congregation that had assembled at any of them. Not only was every seat filled, but a large number had standing-room only during the service. Stephen had no difficulty in finding in the Scriptures many texts directly applicable to the subject which he had taken for his discourse. In fact, he culled from the Bible all direct and indirect allusions and wove them in with his own ideas upon the matter. He spoke of the noble and ignoble uses of money; of the honest and dishonest efforts made to obtain it, and enforced the point, with all the trenchant language and fervent oratory that he could command, that ignoble and dishonest attempts to secure money were the beginnings of lying, cheating, gambling, thieving, and murder.

Stephen had received an invitation, written in a delicate feminine hand, to take dinner with Mr. and Miss Emerson after the service on the fourth Sunday. He knew that Mr. Emerson, the fourth member of the Financial Committee, was the owner of the tenement houses in Schwelkers Court, and, as he had never seen him, the young minister had some curiosity to become acquainted with him and ascertain whether the impression that he had formed of the man was correct.

David Emerson was of medium stature, but slight in build. His face was thin and wrinkled, and his eyes had that peculiar expression always

found in those who make money-getting the great object in life, and in the eyes of those who are money-savers, or what are generally called misers. He had a stoop to his shoulders, which made him look much shorter than he really was. He shambled ahead, followed by Stephen and Miss Emerson, and as the young clergyman contrasted the erect figure and beautiful face of Eleanor Emerson with those of her father, he could hardly believe in the relationship.

When they reached the house, which was located in a respectable though unfashionable quarter of the city, they entered the parlour. Miss Emerson at once excused herself, and Stephen had the opportunity which he desired to study the owner of Schwelkers Court.

“This don’t look much like the houses you have been going to, I imagine,” said Mr. Emerson.

Stephen acknowledged to himself that it did not, although his opinion found no expression in words. The carpet was old-fashioned and worn, even threadbare in many places. The furniture, too, belonged to a somewhat remote period and showed its age and lack of renovation. The articles had all been good of their kind, but they had reached that stage which is best expressed by the term “shabby genteel.”

“Nell is all the time asking me to buy some new

furniture and fix up the parlour, if I don't do any more, but I tell her what was good enough for her ma and me, is good enough for her. I am not rich like Lempster and Sudbury and Skilton. My money does not flow in on me like water, same as it did with them. What I get, I have to work for every day. I don't believe there's any harder work in the world than collecting rents. I have an agent, and he is pretty stiff with tenants, but sometimes they are too much for him. Then I have to take a hand."

At that moment, Miss Emerson entered and announced that dinner was ready. The dining-room had the same air of past comfort and present dilapidation that had been manifest in the parlour. As Stephen took his seat at the table, it became evident to him that the meal supplied them was consonant with its surroundings. There were some slices of cold meat upon a platter, a dish of potato salad, bread and butter, and apple sauce. Cold water was the beverage supplied. Mr. Emerson probably imagined that his visitor was contrasting the dinner with those that he had had on the preceding Sundays. He evidently was not abashed at the comparison, for he said :

"We don't have much to eat on Sundays. Nell's mother never cooked a hot dinner on that day, so we are all used to cold victuals. Besides, you see,

our girl goes home over Sunday. I was fortunate in getting one who was willing to come for a dollar a week less if I would allow her to go home Saturday night and come back Monday morning, and fifty-two dollars a year is worth saving.”

Stephen felt that although Mr. Emerson had listened to his last discourse, it was evident that his injunctions, had he heeded them, would have had no more effect than the proverbial water on a duck's back. Impelled by a curiosity that he could not restrain, he glanced at Miss Emerson's face. Her long, dark eyelashes effectually veiled her eyes, and prevented him from seeing their expression. She was dressed simply in white, relieved at the throat and waist by a touch of colour. Her cheek was flushed, but Stephen charitably inferred that it was due to the hot day and the long walk home, rather than to her father's words.

The old man broke in again:

“Nell's mother used to do all her own work and the washing, too, but nowadays, young women don't know much about housekeeping. We have to keep a girl, and have a woman come in, besides, every Monday to help wash. Why, do you know, that servant girl, when I hired her, had the impudence to tell me that she was willing to do the ironing, but she would not do the washing anyway. But they are all alike. Less work and more pay is the motto with all of them.”

Stephen glanced up again at Miss Emerson. The flush upon her face had deepened. It was apparent that she had not become so hardened that her father's diatribes had lost their effect upon her. The old man was inexorable, and soon thought of a fresh point of attack.

"The way women dress now is shameful. When Nell graduated from the high school, two years ago, — she was about eighteen then, — I bought that 'ere dress for her to graduate in. So far as I can see, it is just as good as ever, but Nell is always dingin' at me, and saying that it is old-fashioned, and she ought to have a new one. Why, if Nell's mother had one good gown to go visiting in, and plenty of calico ones to work round the house in, she was always satisfied."

Again Stephen glanced upward, and saw that Miss Emerson's face had assumed a deeper scarlet. This time her gaze met his, but her lids dropped instantly. She arose from her chair and started to leave the room.

"Where are you going, Nellie?" asked her father. "Hope I have not hurt your feelings by talking right out in meeting before Mr. Holton?"

"Oh, no, father," said the girl, quietly. "I am going to get the dessert."

She left the room.

"Nell is a fine girl, Mr. Holton, if I do say it.

She has been brought up to save her money, 'stead of throwin' it away as most girls do. I know what she wants the parlour fixed up for, and if I do it, there will be a lot of those young swells coming here all the time. But I tell her they won't come so much for her as they will for my money. Well, I'm goin' to take good care of it while I'm living, and I'll try to fix it so she can't squander it after I'm dead. I have left her everything, but I'm going to make a new will and put my property in the hands of trustees and fix it so she can't fritter away anything except the income.”

Stephen was on the point of remonstrating with Mr. Emerson, intending to advise him not to take any such course, but to leave the disposal of his fortune to the good sense of his daughter; but at that moment she entered, bearing the dessert, which consisted of three cup custards upon a tray.

The simple meal over, the little party returned to the parlour. The old man at once took up again his favourite subject.

“As I said at dinner, there is no harder work than collecting rents. Now, there's Mrs. Magruder, who has the basement tenement, Number 1 Schwelkers Court. She owed two weeks' rent last night. My agent dunned her all last week for what was due a week ago, but she told him that her husband had inflammatory rheumatism and was not able to

work. She said there was some money due him, but he was not able to go and get it, and she couldn't because she had three babies to look after and she could not get out of the house. Just as though she couldn't have got somebody to look after the young ones for an hour or so."

"You know I told you, father," said Miss Emerson, "that I would give you five dollars of my own money to pay Mrs. Magruder's rent. She is a nice woman and has three little children."

"I would be a big fool, wouldn't I," said Mr. Emerson, "to take your money to pay her rent with and then give you some more to make up for what you have given me? I might as well pay her rent myself."

Stephen said to himself, "The young girl has a kindly heart and will make good use of her miserly old father's money when she gets the control of it." Feeling that the conversation was not likely to take in any wider range of subjects, and knowing that he was only adding to Miss Emerson's embarrassment by staying longer, Stephen expressed his appreciation of the courtesies he had received, and took his departure.

As he neared the corner of Minton Street and Schwelkers Court, he thought of Mrs. Magruder, whom he had been intending to visit. He had plenty of time to spare, so he went in to see her.

Her husband, an honest, hard-working man, was confined to his bed by an attack of rheumatism, and Mrs. Magruder told Stephen that she was behindhand on her rent, and was unable to pay for a doctor.

“We will fix things all right, Mrs. Magruder,” said the young clergyman. “I will send a doctor here at once, and don’t you worry about the pay. You ought to have let me know about this before. You know we have plenty of money at the chapel to pay for doctors and medicine. But, of course, you are not to blame, for you cannot get out yourself to let me know. If Mr. Emerson or his agent comes to-morrow for the rent, you send them to me. I will loan you the money until your husband is able to pay it.”

Avoiding as well as he could the poor woman’s profuse expressions of gratitude, Stephen left the house. As he turned into Mission Place, he heard loud cries intermingled with oaths, followed by sounds that resembled the breaking of windows or the falling of some heavy substance. With rapid strides, he went up Mission Place. The doors of the chapel were closed. Why was this? They were always kept open in the warm weather. Cries and curses came to him through the open windows, and looking in he saw that Phelps’s fears had been realised. He tried the chapel door. It was locked.

The meaning of this was apparent. Harrigan and his gang did not intend to have their vengeance frustrated by the inopportune arrival of policemen. Pushing up a window, Stephen quickly made an entrance. Rushing to the chapel doors, he unlocked them and threw them wide open. Then he turned his attention to the combatants. The women and children who had been present when the affair began had taken refuge in the yard or garden at the rear of the chapel. Budd Moran and Terry Harrigan had come this time accompanied by half a dozen of their supporters, and the conflict was raging between them and the old soldier, who was assisted by the husbands of some of the women present.

Stephen Holton belonged to the church militant. It seemed to him that he possessed the strength of a dozen men, as he rushed forward. Grasping Budd Moran and Terry Harrigan by their coat collars he pulled them from the prostrate form of Mr. Phelps, who had been the object of their attack. Tightening his grip upon their clothing, and pressing his knuckles in a most uncomfortable manner into the backs of their necks, he dragged his captives to the door of the chapel. If they had thought that he intended to release them then, they were mistaken. Over the cobble-stones of Mission Place Stephen continued his course, and when the corner

of Minton Street was reached his pace did not lessen. Attracted by the unusual sight, for the street was full of people, an eager, hustling, clamorous crowd followed Stephen in his course. The station-house was only one block away, and Stephen's intention was to deliver his prisoners there himself. Near the corner of the street on which the station-house was located, he met two police officers. To them he surrendered his captives, demanding that they be locked up, and requesting the officers to come as soon as possible to the chapel and learn the extent of the injuries which it had suffered at their hands. Stephen then walked back to the chapel, unmolested and alone, for the crowd had surged after the policemen as they bore their prisoners away.

What a sight met Stephen's eyes as he entered his little sanctuary! The women, accompanied by their husbands and children, had gone home, and Budd's and Terry's supporters, fearing the advent of a squad of policemen, had sought safety in flight. Only the old soldier was present to welcome him, and his clothing and face bore evidence of the hard treatment to which he had been subjected.

“You saved my life, Mr. Holton,” the old man gasped out. “They would have finished me if you had not come just as you did.”

“You are not seriously hurt, are you, Mr.

Phelps?" asked Stephen, a tone of sympathy in his voice.

"No, I think the tailor and some soap and water will fix me up all right, but it was a mighty close shave, Mr. Holton. I wouldn't stay here another Sunday for a hundred dollars, and I guess it will cost you more than that to fix up things around here."

Then Stephen surveyed the room. What a picture met his eye! Many of the settees were broken; the ice-water tank had been pushed from its shelf, and its contents had deluged the floor; his collection of song sheets and books had been torn up and cast about the room; his little pulpit had been lifted bodily and thrown into the centre of the room; the organ, being closed up, had escaped injury, but the piano had been pushed from the platform and lay a wreck upon the floor.

"You had better go down to the Emergency Hospital, Phelps," said Stephen, "and ask Doctor Glines to fix you up. You need some of those wounds dressed. Then you had better go to bed in one of the wards, and I will come down later and see you. Can you walk all right?"

"Oh, yes," said the old soldier, "I can walk all right, but I guess I will take your advice. I feel kinder dizzy."

Just then two policemen arrived. They made

a written inventory of the damage that had been inflicted, requesting Stephen to state the probable cost of restoring the chapel to its former condition, and asked Phelps for the names of some of those present, to secure their appearance as witnesses. As they were leaving, they told the two to be in court the next morning at nine.

After Phelps and the policemen had gone, Stephen closed the doors of the chapel and locked them. Then he went into his little study and sat down.

“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, saith the preacher,” were the words that came into his mind. “Yes,” he soliloquised, regretfully, “it is all due to my vanity. I was not satisfied with my little vineyard. I wished to be seen and heard of men. I have worshipped the golden calf, and my little ewe lamb has been sacrificed.”

CHAPTER IX.

“WAY DOWN EAST.”

THE next day was a busy one for Stephen. In the morning he attended the court to appear against the hoodlums who had damaged his chapel. As no evidence could be brought forward by the prisoners to counteract the statements of the Reverend Mr. Holton, Mr. Phelps, and the other witnesses who were called upon to testify, and as it was shown that the attack and the damages inflicted had been without provocation, the full penalty provided for by law was inflicted — a fine of fifty dollars and imprisonment for one year.

When Stephen returned to his little study in the chapel, he found a letter from Mr. Henry Lempster, the treasurer of the Riverside Avenue Church, enclosing two checks, one for five hundred dollars and another for six hundred and fifty-two dollars and eighty-seven cents. The first was the sum agreed upon for his services; the second was the proceeds of the collections taken at the church and which, as Mr. Sudbury had informed him, would be donated for the benefit of the mission.

Then Stephen went to see the chairman of the board of trustees of the Bethany Mission Chapel. He told him about the damage which the chapel had suffered, and that, in his opinion, it would cost at least five hundred dollars to put it in its former condition.

“This would not have happened, Mr. Cressy, if I had not neglected my duty.”

He explained how he had received an invitation to preach at the Riverside Avenue Church; how he had accepted it, and by doing so had neglected the duties which he had undertaken to perform at the chapel. “I feel it is my duty,” he said, “to place the check which I have received for my services in your hands, Mr. Cressy, to pay for the necessary repairs, and, while you are about it, I would suggest that the interior be painted and the ceiling whitened.”

Mr. Cressy objected to taking the check for five hundred dollars, saying that the chapel was not only out of debt, but had a small balance in its favour, and he suggested that the repairs and improvements be paid for out of the sum donated by the Riverside Avenue Church. But to this course Stephen strongly objected, insisting that the money which he had received for his services should be used for the purpose, and Mr. Cressy was obliged to acquiesce in this decision.

Soon after Stephen's return to the chapel, Mr. Emerson appeared.

"Mrs. Magruder told me to call to see you. That's all I could get out of her. What did she mean?"

"It means," said Stephen, calmly, "that I intend to loan her the money with which to pay her rent."

"More fool you," ejaculated Mr. Emerson.

"That may be," replied Stephen, "but as you get the money to which you are entitled, I don't see that my conduct in the matter concerns you. Please give me a receipt."

The transaction over, Mr. Emerson remarked, as a smile played over his features: "I was in the court-room this morning when your case was on. I went in to get an order which would enable me to turn Mrs. Magruder out, if she didn't pay her rent, and I was so interested that I stopped to hear the outcome. You pay the rent for one of them out of your own pocket, and some of the same crowd come up here and clean your place out. There's gratitude for you," and Mr. Emerson took his departure.

Then Stephen fell into a reverie. What should he do? Like Othello, his occupation was gone. He could not stay in the great city and do nothing. Then there came up before his vision again the faces of Rudolph Neaves, Charles Lempster, and last of all, and it lingered the longest, Stella's. No, he would get away from these scenes and associa-

tions. He would visit his friend in the little country town in Maine.

He closed and locked the door of the chapel, tacking up on the bulletin-board the notice, “Closed for Repairs,” and left the keys with Mr. Cressy.

Early the next morning Stephen took the Maine express, and late in the evening reached the Gayville station. Then followed three miles of country roads, rough and jolting, till at length Stephen alighted at the North Gayville parsonage. In response to his somewhat determined knock upon the door, it was opened, and a prim, hard-faced, elderly woman appeared.

“Does the Reverend Octavius Peacock live here?” asked the young clergyman.

“He does. Come in,” the woman answered, laconically. He closed the front door and followed the woman a short distance, when she threw open a door, and said:

“Here’s a man wants to see you.”

With these words, she vanished through another door at the end of the hallway. The occupant of the room turned around in his revolving-chair and inspected the newcomer. As soon as he saw who it was, he sprang to his feet and ran to welcome him with outstretched hands, saying:

“Delighted to see you, Steve. I had almost given you up, after receiving your letter, but I

continued to pray daily that you would change your mind and come to see your old college chum."

"Then you believe in the efficacy of prayer," remarked Stephen, as he deposited his heavy portmanteau upon the floor and took a seat in an old leathern armchair which was at the end of the library table, while his friend stood and looked at him.

"Yes," he answered, "in dry times, but not when rain is plentiful."

"Are not those strange sentiments to come from the lips of a clergyman?" asked Stephen, with an astonished expression on his face.

"Well," replied his friend, resuming his seat, "perhaps so, but I have lived so long here that I have imbibed the sentiments of my parishioners. When everything is going along smoothly, they never come to me. I have to go to them. But when they are in distress, they seek me out, and beg me to beseech divine interposition to remove their troubles."

"A pastor should lead his flock, not be led by it," remarked Stephen.

"I know it," his friend replied. "What you say is theoretically true, but in my case it would be the tail wagging the dog, for there is nothing so monotonous in the world as a country minister's contented congregation in a country town like this.

But you are travel-stained and weary,” remarked the Reverend Octavius, again springing to his feet. “I will not bore you further, but give you safe lodgment for the night. To-morrow I will show you a country parish.”

Stephen’s thoughts were busy that night. He had left the city, hoping that by so doing he could forget Charles Lempster and his victim, and the face of that girl whom he had seen at Mr. Skilton’s. He might have succeeded partly in this, but for an inopportune meeting with Mrs. Skilton, who had regaled him with a racy account of Stella’s departure.

During the day he had not been able to banish this story from his mind, and now it came back to him with redoubled intensity.

Mrs. Skilton had told him that her name was Stella, — a fair name for a fair maiden. But Mrs. Skilton had said that she was a dangerous girl to have in the house, and Mr. Skilton’s opinion was that she was an improper person. Could it be possible that she was morally bad? If so, so much greater the need that a helping hand be held out to her and that she be reclaimed from the sinful path which she was treading. Yet he could not convince himself of that. Those lines which he had noticed in Stella’s face might have been left there merely as a reflection of a past unhappy life. “But not a wicked one,” he murmured, as he fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.

PASTORAL CALLS.

“Is not that a strange name for a horse?” asked Stephen, as the Reverend Octavius drew up before the door of the parsonage. “Why do you call him ‘Aunty?’ I should think ‘Uncle’ would be more appropriate.”

As Stephen took a seat beside him, his friend replied: “His right name is Ante, but as my parishioners are not versed in the pronunciation of Latin, the name has been corrupted, and I have acquired the mispronunciation.” Here he took up the reins and turned into the road. “The rest of his name,” he continued, “is ‘Diluvian,’ for I have not the slightest doubt that he was one of Noah’s passengers. He has only one bad trick. When he comes to sandy places in the road he always stops. He seems to think that as sandy places are hard wheeling, he should be allowed to rest before proceeding.”

“He evidently considers,” said Stephen, “that his master’s rule is a good one for him — comfort above all things.”

"Good shot, Stephen," laughed his friend. "You must tell that to Mrs. Makechnie. The only jokes she sees are those at my expense. By the way, I am going to Gayville first, because Mrs. Makechnie assures me that I must do some buying for the household."

"I hope you are not putting yourself to any extra expense on my account."

"Not at all, but Mrs. Makechnie keeps the household diary, and certain purchases have to be made at certain seasons of the year, or she would command the sun to stand still, as Joshua did. Ah, look ahead, Stephen. Do you see that wagon coming? That gentleman, a living evidence of the preservative power of alcohol, is the corner stone of Briggs's grocery store, Mr. Josh Willcutt."

In accordance with country custom, both teams stopped.

"You have got a pretty heavy load on this morning," remarked the village pastor.

"Not so much as usual. Had to get up too early. I can carry more. Can't say as much for the horse, though. I reckon when we get to the hill up yonder, I shall have to get out and walk."

"Was not that a very pointed allusion to Mr. Willcutt's condition?" asked Stephen, after they were out of earshot.

"Oh, Josh has got beyond noticing any refer-

ence to his drinking habit. Whatever feelings he may have had, became ossified long ago."

"But can nothing be done," asked Stephen, earnestly, "to reform him and others? Why don't you preach against intemperance, and awaken a strong, public sentiment in the town?"

"You are an enthusiast, Stephen, and you always were. I am a philosopher, and I hope I shall always remain so. What good would my preaching do? The people who drink don't come to church. I am not going to insult the intelligence of my congregation by preaching about a vice to which they are not addicted."

"Why don't the good Christian people of the town go to this Briggs and remonstrate with him?"

"My dear Stephen, the good Christian people of this town would as soon think of shaking hands with the devil as having anything to do with old Briggs. He bows to me when we meet, and I return it, but we never speak."

"Pardon me, Ock, but I think you are neglecting your duty."

"I know it," said his friend, "but you are going to be here for a month, Stephen. Take him in hand. You shall have my prayers and what assistance I can render you, for you'll need them. And speaking of Briggs and his trade, I am positive that those barrels in Willcutt's wagon contained liquor for him."

"There is a prohibitory law in this State," said Stephen. "Why don't the officers make a raid and stop the traffic?"

"Well, you see," his friend replied, "the town of Gayville, which we are approaching, is what is known as a rum town. The Gayville officers wink at it or so plan it that they won't see it, and it would look like persecution to raid old Briggs and not do the same with the Gayville establishments."

"The case seems almost hopeless," sighed Stephen.

"That is the philosophical conclusion that I came to some time ago," his friend responded.

The purchases were made, and the return trip to North Gayville began. On the way, many stops were made, and Stephen was introduced to several members of his friend's congregation. Everywhere he was received with the greatest cordiality. Many questions were asked about the great city, and many inquiries made as to whether he had ever met this person or that person with whom the questioners were acquainted. He was offered draughts of cold, creamy milk and dishes of freshly gathered berries.

As they drove away from a little farmhouse, nestling among the pine-covered slopes, Stephen looked about him. He could not see the green hills of dear old Vermont, but yet he almost fancied himself at home. How restful was this placid pastoral spot after the toil and tumult of the city!

"We are now approaching Briggs's grocery," said Octavius; "that short, fat man, with the red, bloated face, standing in the doorway, is Briggs himself. He makes a fine sign for his business."

As they passed the store, a dilapidated old shack, Mr. Briggs bowed to the pastor, and the latter returned it.

"He is one of our selectmen," remarked Octavius, as they drove on.

Stephen was silent. The tone of levity, so often apparent in his friend's remarks, pained him. It was evident that the village pastor did not take the serious view of life that he, the city clergyman, did. But Stephen was a just man, and the thought came to him that, in a great city, the evidences of intemperance were all about him; they were seen every day; but in the country they were hidden from sight, and the terrible effects only became known when it was too late to prevent them.

"Now, Stephen," said his friend, suddenly, "spruce up and look your prettiest. Here comes Mrs. Willcutt. You want to get on the best of terms with her at once, for, if you don't, she will distribute uncomplimentary remarks about you with a speed unequalled by the quickest telegraph system. Ah, good morning, Mrs. Willcutt," said the pastor, drawing rein. "Let me make you acquainted with my friend, the Reverend Stephen Holton, from Boston."

"You don't say you are from Boston," said Mrs. Willcutt, shaking hands with Stephen. "Well, you ain't the only young man that's come up here from there. I have just called on Mrs. Judkins to get a pattern for quilting, and she told me that how she's got two boarders from the city, been here nearly two weeks. I didn't see 'em, for they had gone out fishin' on the pond. She told me who they was, and I have got a mighty good memory for names. One on 'em is named Chester Lethbridge, and the other's name is Charles Lempster."

As the last words fell from Mrs. Willcutt's lips, Stephen gave an involuntary start, which was noticed by the woman.

"Do you know Mr. Lempster?" said she, looking him squarely in the face.

"Yes, oh, yes," Stephen replied, in rather a constrained manner; "I met him on one occasion."

"Quite a number of people from this town have gone down to Boston," the woman continued. "There was Stella Briggs, the daughter of the man that keeps the store —"

Stephen made another involuntary movement. "Perhaps you know her, too?"

Stephen thought for a moment before he answered. So the groceryman's daughter, who had gone to Boston, was named Stella. What a strange coincidence! Then he answered: "No, Mrs. Willcutt, I never met Miss Briggs."

"Well, Stella was a mighty pretty girl," the old woman went on. "She had light hair, which curled in little ringlets all over her head, and that funny kind of blue eyes that seem sort of purple when you look at them crosswise."

Stephen felt his heart beating violently.

"Stella was the best dancer in the town, and had her pick of partners. She was a great flirt, and jus' led the fellers on till they proposed to her, and then gave them the mitten, one after the other. The last one that got it was Jeeth Judkins. Arter that, she left town, and I don't believe nobody has heard from her since, 'cept me, and I only once. It was about three months ago that I got a letter from her, asking me to send her something that her mother gave her, and which she forgot to put in her bag when she went away. I thought the girl was entitled to it, and so I sent it to her. She was working then for a man named Skilton, but Lord knows where she is now."

Here Octavius interrupted Mrs. Willcutt's flow of language. "We shall have to say good-morning, Mrs. Willcutt. I am making my calls this morning, and it is getting near dinner time. I will bring Mr. Holton around to see you in a few days. He wants to know all about the town, and I told him you were the village historian."

Octavius startled Ante with a cut from the whip,

and Mrs. Willcutt was quickly left behind. If his friend had spoken to him, Stephen could not have answered. What a tumult of feeling surged through his breast! What a mystery was fate! He had tried to get away from that which had troubled him. He had hoped to leave behind him the memory of three faces,—the murderer and his victim, and the face of the young girl which had enlisted his sympathy, he knew not why; and yet, after all, to this little country village, hundreds of miles from the city, had come this man, and in this little village that girl had been born, was well-known, and from it she had gone to make her living in the great city. Had she done wisely and well? Time only could answer the silent query that rose in his heart.

The pastor's buggy rattled along, now up a shady slope, then down a sunny stretch, till it neared the Judkins farmhouse. Then Octavius hitched Ante to the post, and, alighting with Stephen, knocked at the front door. There was no response, and the knock was repeated. But this delay in obtaining an entrance requires explanation.

About half an hour previous to their arrival, Mrs. Judkins and Grandma Crane, sitting in the kitchen, had heard a similar summons at the front door. Sareta was busy in the milk-room and Polly and Dolly were feeding the chickens, as was

their custom. Ichabod was seated in the kitchen doorway, busily engaged in whittling.

"Ich," said his mother, "go see who that is making a call so early this morning."

Ichabod tiptoed out to the corner of the house, and returning, informed his mother that it was Mr. Peacock.

"Lord a massy!" said Mrs. Judkins, "it is pastor's day, and neither of us is fixed up. Well, I will put on a clean apron, and " — surveying her mother — "you look all right. Now, you jus' go in the parlour and sit down, and I'll go and open the door."

With some delay and with much trepidation, Mrs. Judkins did open the door, and found, to her astonishment, not Mr. Peacock, but one of their old turkey gobblers, who, finding the front gate open, had entered the garden, and in his attempts to swallow the knocker on the door, had attracted Mrs. Judkins's attention. The lady slammed the door to, and took rapid strides to the kitchen in search of her mischievous son, but he had vanished, and was nowhere in sight.

When the second summons came, Mrs. Judkins did not go to the front door, but seeing her husband, who was coming down the road toward the house, she called out, loudly: "Jethro, jus' shoo that turkey gobbler away from our front door. I

shooed him away once, but I 'spect he has got back again."

Instead of doing so, Mr. Judkins walked toward her, and when near enough said: "I kinder reckon, Betsey, you had better do the shooin' yourself. I see a couple of gentlemen standing inside the porch, and I recognise the pastor's rig out in the road."

Mrs. Judkins was profuse in her explanations and apologies after admitting the visitors. Although often made the victim of her son's practical jokes, in her heart she was proud of him, and never tired of recounting his exploits. On this occasion, she thought the best way to apologise to her visitors for her apparent incivility was to tell the story.

Stephen was introduced to 'Ram Judkins and Grandma Crane. The former found an opportunity to repeat several Scriptural quotations, and the latter cited 'Bijah's opinions on certain points. Stephen was struck with the sweet face and modest demeanour of Sareta, and actually charmed with the twins, who seemed destined to become counterparts of their sister.

Although fate had apparently brought Stephen Holton and Charles Lempster to the same town, it seemed in no hurry to bring them into actual contact, for Lempster and his friend had gone on a trip up to the mountains, accompanied by young Jethro as guide.

In fact, though Stephen visited the Judkins house twice again before he left, he did not see Lempster either time. On his second call, however, he chanced to meet Chester Lethbridge, and was pleased with the frank, unassuming manner of the young lawyer, who, in turn, was attracted by the vigorous and intense personality of the young clergyman.

In the course of their talk, Stephen spoke of his mission work and of the incident which had forced him to take a vacation.

"I hope you are enjoying your rest," said Chester.

"Yes, but for one circumstance. I had hoped when I left the great city and came to the town that I should find it free from the vice of intemperance, but I have been disappointed."

"And so have I. My friend Mr. Lempster is not bad at heart, but he cannot say 'no' to his boon companions. Consequently he has fallen into bad habits, and it was with the hope of removing him from temptations that I induced him to accompany me to North Gayville. I am more disappointed than you could possibly imagine at the result."

"The demon drink," declared Stephen, as he rose to go, "has myriad heads, and wherever we go, we find one."

"I am afraid it would take another St. George," remarked Chester, "to slay the dragon."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ELOPEMENT.

THE two city boarders were getting along quite comfortably at the Judkins farmhouse. Chester Lethbridge was not exactly bashful, though diffident. He was not easily approached, nor could he make friends quickly. Charles Lempster was exactly the reverse. It required less than a minute for him to get on speaking terms with any man, woman, or child who would talk with him, and, at the end of a quarter of an hour, he was as well acquainted as some people would have been after a week's intimacy.

Before he had been in the house twenty-four hours, he had argued Scripture with 'Ram Judkins, listened to Grandma Crane's biography of her late husband, visited Polly and Dolly's chickens, and ended by riding see-saw with Ichabod and the two little girls on one end of the plank, and he on the other. There was but one other conquest for him to make, and that was the most difficult. Saretta answered his remarks in a pleasant way, but

gave him no marked encouragement, and, for once, Charles Lempster was forced to confess to himself, for he never would have done so to Chester Lethbridge, that it would probably take a week before he would be on good speaking terms with Miss Judkins.

Strange as it may seem, although Chester Lethbridge was not facile enough to get on so well with the other members of the family as Lempster had done, he was much more successful with Sareta, and, to Charles Lempster's astonishment, the second evening after their arrival, Miss Judkins accepted Chester's invitation to go to walk with him, and Charlie was forced to content himself with the company of Jethro, who gave him the biography of about everybody in the village, and promised to take him the rounds the next day and introduce him. It was natural to infer that going the rounds included a visit to Briggs's grocery, and it is equally natural to infer that, during that visit, Charles Lempster found that the creature comforts, which he had so enjoyed in the city, and from which he had fled, so to speak, were to be obtained in that little country town, although much inferior in quality, and, considering the quality, much higher in price.

Charles Lempster derived great amusement from his conversations with young Ichabod. He liked

to tease and torment people, and, by observing this course toward Ichabod, he had succeeded in eliciting from the latter many comical speeches. He had nicknamed the boy "Itch," and the youngster had retaliated by calling Charlie "the old scratch."

Between Chester Lethbridge and old 'Ram Judkins a mild friendship existed. This was based upon the fact that Chester listened patiently to 'Ram's quotations from the Scriptures and nodded approvingly and acquiesced verbally in the old gentleman's interpretation of their meaning. But a friendship of a much stronger nature had grown up between Chester and Grandma Crane. She declared to her daughter Betsey that Mr. Lethbridge was just the nicest young man she had ever seen, and she thought he would make Serety a fine husband. Mrs. Judkins had replied that she was no match-maker and that Serety must make her own choice without any help or suggestion from her.

A mutual liking had also sprung up between Chester and the two little girls, Polly and Dolly. They were both anxious to obtain an education, and Chester had spent considerable of his time in looking over their school-books with them and making plain to their comprehension many complicated questions in their studies.

Both Chester and Charlie, although they had not confessed it to each other, had fallen in love with

sweet little Sareta Judkins. Charles Lempster, finding that his forward manner of addressing her was not thoroughly appreciated, imitated Chester's tactics, and being more adept in pleasing conversation, gained perceptibly over his rival. Like many others who indulge in intoxicating liquors, he was never so pleasant and attractive in his manner as when he was, to use his own expression, half full. He had no difficulty in getting half full or completely full at Briggs's grocery. This fact was known to Chester, as well as to Jethro Judkins, Sr., and to his son. To both father and son, Sareta was the apple of their eye, and they had that innate distrust of a man who drinks liquor, so common to honest-hearted country folk.

When the time came for Chester to return to his duties, he expected that Charlie Lempster would accompany him, but the latter informed him that he was not obliged to go home, and that he proposed to stay another week or two.

So Chester left for home with a heavy heart. He had found no opportunity to speak of the love which was in it to Sareta, and the chances were that he would not have dared to, had the opportunity offered. He could plead a cause before a judge better than one with a woman. To go away and leave his rival in full possession of the field was very hard to bear, but there had been no alternative.

For a couple of days after reaching home, he thought the matter over, and finally decided that, under the circumstances, he was justified in writing what he had not spoken. He explained in his letter that he had not spoken because he wished to be sure that his heart had told him aright; that he was now convinced that it had, and in a few simple sentences, he declared his love and asked Sareta to become his wife.

But the very same evening Charles Lempster had come to a similar conclusion. In company with Sareta, he had wandered down the road after supper, and sitting down upon a broad stone, well sheltered by an overhanging tree, Charlie, who had visited Briggs's grocery until his tongue was capable of uttering any compliments and making any promises, declared his love for the young country girl, which she accepted, and gave her own in return. If Chester had remained, the result would, probably, have been different. Sareta had liked him much the better at first, and he could have retained his advantage if he had remained or if he had spoken before he went away. Many lovers have lived lives of regret from a similar mistake.

Charles Lempster looked for as easy a conquest of the father as of the daughter, but was destined to be greatly surprised in his interview on the subject with Farmer Judkins. "No," said the old

farmer, "I won't consent to no such engagement. Because you two've been spoonin' for a month ain't no sign that you oughter become man and wife. 'Sides, I know that you've spent a good deal of time and money down at Briggs's grocery, and, with my consent, my daughter shall never marry a drinkin' man."

Charlie looked at young Jethro, expecting him to take his part, but he fancied that he did so in a very lukewarm manner. Jethro, Sr., soon marshalled on his side his wife, Grandpa Judkins, and Grandma Crane. The family council were firm in their stand that no man who drank liquor should wed Sareta, and Charles saw that he must either retreat ignominiously, or run away with his prize.

A few days later Lempster took leave of the family, and apparently started for his home. The next day Sareta asked her brother to take her with him to Gayville when he went over. When they reached the town, Jethro went to transact some business at a farmer's house near by, and left Sareta in charge of the horse. She told him as he left her that she was going to take a little drive up the road.

"Be sure and be back in half an hour," said Jethro.

She did not answer him, but drove off. It was several hours later before Jethro found his horse

and carryall tied to a hitching-post at the Gayville station, but it did not take him many minutes to learn that his sister, in company with young Lempster (whom the station-agent knew by sight), had taken the train for Portland.

When Jethro arrived home without his sister, he encountered an onslaught which he had not expected. None of the family would believe but that he was partner to the flight, and when the bewildered lad retreated to the barn and sat down to think the matter over, the evidence did seem to be pretty strong against him.

Of course, Mrs. Willcutt soon got possession of the news, and nothing had reached her during the past year that had given her more pleasure than to tell her dear friends how Sareta Judkins had run away with that Mr. Lempster, and that Mr. Briggs, who boarded with her, had told her that he had never seen a young man of his age who could drink so much hard liquor in a given space of time as Mr. Lempster could, and, in his opinion, it would be but a short time before Sareta Judkins would be sorry for the step she had taken.

"But," Mrs. Willcutt would conclude, "the Judkinses have always held their heads so high and have been so proud of their daughter that, perhaps, it won't do 'em any hurt to take 'em down a bit."

CHAPTER XII.

THE YOUNG WIFE.

A FEW days before Sareta's flight, Stephen received a letter from Mr. Cressy, telling him that the chapel had been fully repaired and was never so attractive as in its present condition. There was a balance of over a hundred dollars to Stephen's credit from the amount he had turned over to Mr. Cressy, and the Riverside Avenue Church Fund had placed the mission on a firm financial footing.

Now that there was work to be done, Stephen could remain idle no longer. Despite his friend's importunities to remain yet a little while, he left North Gayville the day after receiving this letter, and took up his labour in the slums once more. What Mr. Cressy had written him was true. The chapel never looked so inviting before, and the young minister resumed his duties there with his usual earnestness. He paid a visit to Schwelkers Court, and found that Mr. Magruder had recovered and had gone to work again. The Widow Milligan told him that as soon as Budd Moran and Terry

Harrigan had been locked up, Schwelkers Court was a different place.

"It's a pity," said she, "that the sentence is so short. It should have been a dale longer. I would have made it tin years, and the law will do it one of these days," she added, as she plunged her arms into the hot suds up to the elbows.

A month after Stephen returned to Boston, he received a letter which surprised him greatly.

"MY DEAR STEVE:—Prepare yourself for a couple of severe mental shocks. The first one is that, about a month ago, the modest little Puritan maiden, Sareta Judkins, ran away with Charles Lempster. Where they are now, or what they are doing, the Lord alone knows, but the surmises of North Gayville are both various and scandalous.

"The second is that I have taken unto myself a wife. She is Miss Cora Patten, the only child of Doctor Patten of Gayville. He is a widower, and well fixed financially. Besides this, he is prominent in Masonry and Odd Fellowship, and wields considerable political influence.

"But my happiness is contingent upon one condition. My father-in-law has insisted upon my adding his family name to my own. I might have objected to thus covering up my plumage, but I reflected that, although the name of my intended was Cora, from

babyhood she had always been called 'Birdie,' and Birdie Peacock was too much for either an ardent lover or a fond father. So the change has been made. I had refrained from making you my confidant because I divined that you had heart trouble of a similar nature, and that you might fear I was trying to force an avowal of it from you.

"The happy event took place but two days syne. Cora does not wish to live in North Gayville, so we are going to live in Portland, where, by my father-in-law's assistance, I have secured the position of assistant pastor in the church presided over by the very venerable and Reverend Mark Akenside. I know that I am not worthy to unloose his shoe-strings, but, at the same time, the probable course of events, which I have no desire to hasten, will lead me to occupy, figuratively speaking, those same shoes.

"In a week or so, we shall be located in Portland. Write me there, my dear Stephen, but be sure to remember the addition to my family name, and address me as

"OCTAVIUS P. PATTEN."

This letter did give Stephen some severe mental shocks. As Octavius had told him when in North Gayville, he was of the earth, earthy, and this step he had taken seemed to confirm it. Then Stephen's

thoughts reverted to Sareta Judkins. Had Charles Lempster been honourable in his dealings with this young and trusting girl? To Stephen's mind, a man who could dip his hands in his friend's blood, and then sit down with his family to dinner with a smile upon his face, would not be overscrupulous in his dealings with a trusting woman. If he found out that Lempster had deceived and betrayed this young girl, it would only confirm his estimate of the young man's character.

For several days Stephen tried to convince himself that the affair was no concern of his; that his acquaintance with both parties was only casual and would, probably, never be resumed; but the love of humanity, which makes every suffering man and woman a brother or sister to be advised and aided, was the predominating feature in Stephen Holton's character, and he decided to learn the facts in the case.

He consulted a directory, but Charles Lempster's name did not appear there. Then he made a friendly call upon Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lempster, but there was no sign, nor was anything said, to give any indication that any one had been added to the household. He knew that Charles Lempster was in town, for he had passed him upon the street, although the young man gave no sign of recognition. Then Stephen called upon a detective, whose services

he had once engaged when an anonymous letter had been sent to him, warning him to close his chapel and leave the slum district or he would get into trouble. The detective had discovered the writer of the missive, and he had been placed under bonds to keep the peace. After listening to Stephen's story the detective said:

"How fortunate it was that you came to me. I have a client who, strange to say, lodges with Mrs. Lempster. She lives in the Alexandra Flats, No. 2."

Sareta was astonished when, in response to a knock upon her door, she opened it and discovered Mr. Holton. She invited him into her little parlour, and for awhile conversation ran on matters connected with North Gayville. Stephen spoke of his friend's marriage. Sareta replied that she knew Cora Patten, and that she was a lovely girl.

"They were married at the parsonage," said Stephen. "Two such events coming so close together must have made considerable excitement in North Gayville."

"He does not know," said Sareta to herself, but she was too honest to even act an untruth.

"Mr. Lempster and I were not married at home," she said, her lip trembling as she spoke the words. "We were married in Portland."

"Mr. and Mrs. Patten are to reside in Portland,"

remarked Stephen. "He has secured the position of assistant to the Reverend Mr. Akenside."

"Why, what a coincidence!" cried Sareta. "Mr. Akenside was the clergyman who married us. He is a very old man, but, in spite of that, he writes a beautiful hand, just like copperplate."

She went to a bureau drawer, and, taking out a small roll of paper, untied the white ribbon with which it was fastened, and handed her marriage certificate to Stephen.

"I am delighted to see this," he remarked. Then, thinking that possibly his speech might be misinterpreted, or rather misunderstood, he added: "I never knew an aged person to write so firm and decided a hand."

He took his departure, feeling convinced, but not fully satisfied. There might be some loophole for fraud. So he wrote to his friend in Portland to examine the records and be sure that there was no mistake. Imagining that Stephen was in great haste, his friend telegraphed:

"License O. K. Records equally so. Aged clergyman remembers couple. O. P. P."

Stephen was now satisfied that no injury had been done to Sareta and, although in his opinion she had done wrong by eloping, no stigma could be

attached to her. How happy he would have been to have been able to say the same about Stella. Would the time ever come when he would know the true story of the young girl's life, whose face had so attracted him?

Sareta Lempster was settled in a cozy little home, to which, it must be said to his credit, her husband had added many luxuries to the comforts which it possessed. He had told her, shortly after their return to Boston from their honeymoon, that he did not think it would be best to tell his father of his marriage for awhile, that is, until he could get into some business, so that if Mr. Lempster interposed any objection, he could be independent and make a living for his wife on his own account.

He informed his father that he had been given an excellent opportunity to go into the note-broking business, which would require a couple of thousand dollars. Henry Lempster was so carelessly indulgent and had so much blind confidence in his son that he gave him a check for the amount without a searching inquiry into the young man's plausible story.

What business did Charles Lempster engage in? He did not go into trade nor into manufacturing; he was not a banker nor a broker, although he had a desk in the office of one of his friends, a "bucket-

shop" operator, in order to give some colour to the story he had told his father. He was, in one sense, a speculator. He staked his money; sometimes he won and sometimes he lost. During the summer he was the constant attendant at race courses, and when winter came those inviting rooms in which faro, roulette, and other games of chance are engaged in, were frequented by him almost nightly, while the young wife was at home alone.

To the eager requests of Sareta for more of her husband's society, his only answer was: "I must attend to my business, so that I can make a living for you. I am sure my father will disinherit me as soon as he learns of my marriage, and the only way for me to do is to work night and day, until I have enough saved up so that I can tell him all and be independent in the future."

Although he constantly averred that he was making money and putting it away in the bank for their future use, it was with the greatest difficulty that Sareta obtained any for her own personal needs, which were few and simple, but, when the household bills were presented, he always gave her money to pay them promptly. His purpose was to keep his wife in seclusion as much as possible.

One day she surprised her husband by asking him if he were willing that she should take a lodger. He demurred strongly at first, but when she told him

that an old gentleman had applied for lodgings, and was willing to pay what appeared to her a very large sum for one of their unoccupied rooms, he consented, and told her that the money received for the room she could have for herself.

In this way, Christopher Lithgow, a retired sea-captain, became an inmate of Charles Lempster's house. He told Sareta that he was an old bachelor; that he had been to sea for forty years and had made considerable money; that he had left a sister in the city when he went away, and he proposed to find her, if she was still alive. Her maiden name was Mary Jane Lithgow, but he supposed, of course, that if she had married it would be hard work to find her, since he did not know her husband's name. He had money enough to advertise, and, if necessary, to pay a detective, and, as he had nothing else to do, he intended to make her discovery the work of the remainder of his life, for he had no one else to whom to leave his money. He had advertised in the newspapers, and failing to secure any reply, had engaged the services of a detective, named John Hodges. Hodges came to the house to talk over the case with Lithgow, and naturally became acquainted with Mrs. Lempster. It was he on whom Stephen had called in his search for the young wife.

CHAPTER XIII.

A COUNTRYMAN IN THE CITY.

AFTER Sareta's elopement, her name was seldom, if ever, mentioned by the members of the Judkins family, although she was by no means banished from their minds or hearts. Ichabod thought that Charlie Lempster was all right, but youthful minds are very apt to be influenced by pecuniary considerations, and Ichabod had never seen so much money in his life as during Charlie Lempster's short stay at the old farmhouse.

Polly and Dolly missed their elder sister very much, for it was she who had arranged their dresses, tied their bows, and combed their hair, and had given them those other little attentions which an elder sister knows so well how to render. Deprived of her kind and loving services, they soon became invaluable to and inseparable from each other.

Grandma Crane became reminiscent and recalled an incident which happened in town about the time she and 'Bijah were married. A young girl had run away with a young fellow, but she came home within

a year, saying that her husband could not support her. She added that she could get nothing to do except housework, and if she was going to do housework, she preferred to go home and help her mother.

"I shall never forget," said Grandma Crane, "what 'Bijah said on that occasion. It was about the same time that our son John left home, and I was wonderin' —"

"So am I," said 'Ram.

The old lady, somewhat astonished by the remark, lifted her spectacles, and looked at him inquiringly.

"I was wondering, grandma," said he, "how it was that that incident happened just after you were married, and that your son John, who was eighteen or nineteen years old, I believe, when he left home —"

"Oh," cried the old lady, "I'm afraid my forgettery is getting to be a great deal bigger than my memory. Well, how I did mix things up! Well, my husband, 'Bijah, was the only man who could put things together that didn't belong there and not have nobody notice it. Well, as I said, I was wonderin' about John."

"So am I," repeated 'Ram.

The old lady lifted her spectacles and polished them with her apron. "Well, what have I said now?" she asked.

"Why, you haven't told me what 'Bijah said."

"Well," said the old lady, with a sigh, "when I get to talkin' about 'Bijah, it makes me think of John, but 'Bijah said, and I shall never forget the tone in which he said it: 'Love will go where it's sent, and there's no use crying over spilt milk.'"

Sareta's flight had furnished 'Ram with abundant opportunities for Scriptural quotations. He began by inserting in the grace, which he said before meals, certain references to the "prodigal son." Now Sareta could not be considered as a prodigal son, but 'Ram knew that the application would be readily seen by the members of the family. On several occasions, at the Scriptural readings which took place on Tuesday and Friday evenings, when the whole family was assembled, he had read the parable of "The Prodigal Son," and had dwelt with great emphasis on that portion of it which referred to the return of the young man to his father's house.

Farmer Judkins said nothing but thought a great deal. The mother was equally silent and thoughtful. As Thanksgiving approached, she thought to herself that Sareta would surely write to her, and perhaps come home that day. How happy it would make her if the whole family could gather about the table and make it a joyful occasion, as it had been wont to be. But Thanksgiving Day came and went, and there was no word or sign received from the missing daughter. For a week

the mother became despondent. Her dejection was noticed by her husband, and he remarked to grandma that he was sure that Betsey was ailing.

"Oh, it ain't that at all," the old lady responded. "She is worritin' about Sareta. I know how she feels, for I felt jus' that way when John went away. Give her time and she will get over it, same as I did, only it is different with her, for my John never came back." The old lady removed her spectacles, so that she could wipe the tears from her eyes.

As Christmas approached, the mother's hopes rose again. Surely Sareta would not let this day pass by without writing to her, or sending her some little remembrance. But the day which symbolises peace on earth and good will toward men came and went, as had the other festal day, but it brought no letter or Christmas gift from Sareta.

Although the matter had not been referred to after the first outburst of feeling on the subject, young Jethro felt that, in the opinions of his parents and grandparents, he was largely responsible, if not wholly so, for his sister's elopement. Why had he left her with the horse and walked to the farmer's house, where he had some business to transact, when he might have more easily driven there and taken her with him? Jethro thought and thought over the matter, but he never could explain to himself why he did what he had done.

One night Farmer Judkins made a startling proposition to his wife. It was no less than this: that they should draw some money from the bank and send their son, Jethro, to the city to find Sareta, and ascertain her condition in life. Old 'Ram and Grandma Crane were added to the conclave on the subject, and it was finally decided by this family board of strategy, by a vote of three to one, that young Jethro should undertake the journey. The vote in the negative came from Grandma Crane, who said that she well remembered how her husband, 'Bijah, went to the city on one occasion, and had come back and said that — and she never heard him say such a thing afore — that he would rather go to Tophet than get into that pesky place again.

Jethro was delighted when the conclusion arrived at was announced to him, and delightedly made his preparations for his journey.

“I don't know how long I shall be away,” he said to his crony, Josh Willcutt, “and it may be that I shall never come back. As I have often told you, I'm getting tired of hoeing and haying, and it may be that I shall strike upon something rich, and decide to stay there, but I shall write you about what goes on, and I shall expect you to go up to the house as often as you can, find out what is going on, and write me full particulars.”

Before starting, Jethro took the precaution to

send a letter to Charles Lempster. The latter had given him an address, which proved to be a correct one, for, in due time, Jethro received a reply. Charlie told him not to try to hunt him up, as he was in business, and was out of town a great deal; that when Jethro came to the city, it would be best to hire a room to lodge in, and to get his meals wherever he happened to be; that that would be cheaper and more convenient.

“Send me a letter to the same address, as soon as you get to the city,” he said, “and, when I get back from my business trip, I will take you to see your sister.”

Jethro thought this was a little strange, and wondered why Charlie could not have told him where he lived, so that he could go and stay with Sareta until he got back. He finally contented himself by reflecting that city ways were not country ways, anyway, and, as he probably would have to wait only a day or two, it would not make any difference.

Jethro reached the city in due season, and found lodgings. The day after, he wrote to his friend, Josh Willcutt, as follows:

“MY DEAR FRIEND JOSH:—I landed in Boston last night, and, as I promised to write you what I was doing to the Boston folks, and what the

Boston folks were doing to me, I take my pen in hand to keep you posted from start to finish.

“When I got off the train, it was so confounded dark I didn’t feel like trusting myself alone in a big city, where there is so much prejudice against country folks, so I hired a hack, and told the fellow to drive me to a first-class boarding-house, and do it quick. I began to count, just to get an idea how far it was, and just as I struck 126, he pulled the horse up, with a jerk that nearly threw me through the window, opened the door, grabbed my valise, pulled the door-bell, introduced me to the landlady, took my half-dollar, and was off. Just two minutes and a half. If I can’t find anything else to do in this place, I shall take to driving a hack. I have been figuring it up, and find that, in about three months, I could be a Rockefeller on my own hook.

“I am boarding at No. 228 Stony Brook Street, so drop me a line there now and then. Don’t forget to get up to the house occasionally. Keep your eye peeled and tell me what is going on. You can tell old Briggs I haven’t seen his daughter Stella yet. When I do find her, I’ll tell you, but don’t you let on to old Briggs. I’ll tell you why. Just before I came away, I asked him if I should send him a telegram if I came across her. He said I had better write; it wouldn’t cost so much. Then I asked

him for a postal to write him on. He said 'no' again, he would give dad the cent when he got the news. Now I don't think any man of honour is bound to do anything to accommodate such a mean cuss as that. Remember me to your better half, but on your life, don't let her get hold of this letter.

"Better and more of it next time,

"Yours confidentially,

"JETHRO."

CHAPTER XIV.

BUYING ON INSTALMENTS.

THE anxious father and mother at North Gayville had received two letters from their son. He first told them that he had arrived safely and had found a good boarding-place. He said that he had written to Charlie Lempster, but had received no reply. He supposed Charlie was away on business, and he thought that perhaps Sareta might be with him.

The second letter was no more reassuring. He had written Charlie Lempster again, but had received no reply. He added that he was doing some work in the city, and that he guessed that he could afford to wait until Charlie got back. A third letter contained the comforting intelligence for which the loving parents had so long waited.

“MY DEAR DAD AND MUMSEY:—Charlie got back and came to see me as soon as he reached town. He took me right up to see Sareta, who is looking as fine as silk. They live in what they call here a

flat — that is, a house with the rooms all on one floor, only they put these houses one on top of the other until they get six or eight in a pile. Her rooms are fixed up real nice and she seems to be quite happy.

“You will be glad to hear that she did write you a letter as soon as she got to Boston, and gave it to Charlie to mail. He swears that he put it in the post-office. I don’t suppose you will ever see that letter, but you must take the will for the deed. Sareta says that she is going to write you a long letter to-morrow.

“Now I am going to say a word about myself. Charlie says business is booming here, and that it will be easy for me to get a job where I can make some money. Now, as there won’t be any farm work worth speaking of for several months yet, wouldn’t it be a good idea for me to try and find something to do here? Of course, if you say so, I’ll come right home. Sareta wants me to stay. She’s let her only room, but I can take dinners with her and see her every day. Write me what you think I had better do.

Your loving son,

“JETHRO.”

This letter was read and discussed by the family conclave. When Charles Lempster’s remark concerning the letter was read, old ’Ram interpolated:

“But I say unto you, swear not at all.” It was finally decided to let Jethro remain in the city until it was time for farm work to begin in the spring.

A long, loving letter was received from Sareta. It asked their forgiveness for an act which, no doubt, had appeared very sinful to them, but which she considered had brought great happiness to her; if they loved her, and she knew they did, the fact that she was so happy should lead them to forgive her.

Old Farmer Judkins wrote a letter, with his wife’s assistance, in which Sareta was taken back to their hearts and given their blessing. When the letter was read to old ’Ram and Grandma Crane, the first wished to insert some proper Scriptural quotations, and Grandma Crane wanted Sareta’s attention called to the incident of which ’Bijah had spoken and which she had related to ’Ram. So a new letter was written containing these suggestions, but when Mr. Judkins went over to Gayville to post it, he decided the matter for himself by sending the first one which was written and throwing the other into a brook as he crossed the bridge which spanned it.

The Argonauts of ’49 never sent home letters containing stronger assurances of their coming prosperity and wealth than those contained in Jethro’s letters to his parents. In one, he said:

"I am in the swim, as they call it here. It means getting on to a good thing, where you are sure to make money. I don't spend any more than I can help. As soon as I make my money, I put it in the bank, so it will begin to draw interest. Now, if there's anything you want round the house to make you and mumsey or the kids comfortable and happy, just go ahead and buy it. When the bills come due, if you haven't got the money, just let me know and I will send it to you. Don't be backward, for I tell you, dad, it is as easy making money down here as it is shovelling snow in winter."

"Well, pa," said Mrs. Judkins, after that letter was read, "we can go ahead and buy that hoss over in Gayville you heard about."

"Right, ma," responded her husband, "an' I'll get a new mowin'-machine and feeder, now that we're able to pay for 'em."

When the new horse was led into the farmyard, the children clapped their hands with delight. The horse was soon followed by the new mowing-machine and the new feeder; and many of the farmers who lived in the neighbourhood came over to see the latest improvements in agricultural implements. But the tide of extravagance which had been started by the purchase of the new horse, the mowing-machine, and the feeder, was not to be stemmed now that it had obtained so much headway. The agents, who

had formerly thought North Gayville unworthy of a visit, arrived one after another, and made strenuous efforts to sell their wares. First came the man with the illustrated family Bible, bound in leather and with gilded edges. Old 'Ram was delighted with the pictures, but said that the type was too small for him to read easily. The price of the Bible was twenty-five dollars, five dollars down and two dollars a month, and it soon rested upon the table in the parlour.

Next came the sewing-machine man. Polly and Dolly were delighted, and declared that they could not only make their own clothes, but those for mumsey and Ich. The price and terms of payment seemed very reasonable, only five dollars down and three dollars a month. A place was found for the sewing-machine by the front window in the sitting-room. The agent told them that the lady who taught new beginners was busy over in Gayville, but that she would come to North Gayville as soon as he had canvassed the district.

Next came the piano salesman. He had an instrument on exhibition at Gayville, and would Mr. Judkins and some of the family go over and listen to it? Polly and Dolly were both anxious to go, and as there was room for four in the agent's team, the visit was paid. Mr. Judkins deposited twenty-five dollars, and agreed to pay ten dollars a month,

the price of the piano being three hundred dollars. How handsome the little parlour looked with the new piano in it! Both Polly and Dolly possessed good ears for music, and it was not long before Polly was playing accompaniments, and the sisters were singing the hymns made popular by Moody and Sankey.

Although 'Ram bewailed his son's extravagance on general principles, he was greatly pleased with the piano, or rather with the singing of the hymns to which its possession gave rise. But the little parlour was to be still further beautified. The man who takes old daguerreotypes and from them constructs life-size portraits, done in crayon and framed in massive gilt frames, in due time arrived at the Judkins house.

After showing samples of his work, it was not long before Mr. and Mrs. Judkins decided that they ought to have portraits of their fathers and mothers, and when Mrs. Judkins suggested that they had a nice daguerreotype of Sareta, that was added to the list, and the agent secured five orders. When the portraits arrived, the parlour became transformed, almost transfigured. The big kerosene lamp on the table was lighted. Its bright rays fell upon the broad gilt frames, from which they were reflected, making the room, as Grandma Crane said, look like a cave of gold, and she recalled an incident which

was told to 'Bijah by a man who went out to Californy in '49, which was to the effect that gold was so plenty and clay was so scarce out there that the miners made the gold into bricks and used them to build their houses with. On hearing this, old 'Ram gave a contemptuous sniff and left the room, but before he closed the door, he was heard to remark:

“ I said in my haste, all men are liars.”

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE DOWNWARD TRACK.

ABOUT a fortnight after Jethro arrived in the city, Charles Lempster called to see him. He explained that his business took him out of the city a great deal, and he had only received Jethro's letter the day before. He invited Jethro to take dinner with him the next day at home, and that young man then met his sister, now Mrs. Lempster, for the first time since she had outwitted him on the day that he drove her to Gayville. He had a hearty laugh over the affair.

Jethro had no chance to have a private conversation with his sister, but judged from her appearance and surroundings that she was very comfortably situated. The next day he wrote the letter which removed the feeling of dread apprehension that had filled the hearts of his father and mother, and implanted, in its stead, a sense of comfort and satisfaction.

Charles Lempster's out-of-town business seemed to have been completed, for there was not a day when he did not find time to see Jethro.

"You must see the town," he said, and Jethro did see it. At first he refused to drink anything but cider, but the hard, effervescent drink to which they gave that name in the city, did not taste like the sweet juice of the apple to which he had been accustomed. Besides that, it made his head ache, and Charlie suggested that he drop it and substitute lager beer, which he thought was a much more healthful drink. Jethro did not like beer, and it soon palled upon his taste. Then he took to drinking wines. Having taken so many steps, it became easy to travel the rest of the road under his brother-in-law's accomplished tutelage, and Jethro could soon toss off his four fingers of whiskey straight, a gin fizz, or a brandy smash as deftly as his teacher, and with much less appreciable effect, for Jethro's strong constitution had not, as yet, been weakened by such excesses as that to which Charles Lempster's had been subjected.

Jethro asked Charlie to get him something to do. Charlie said, "You have not seen the town yet. Don't go to work until you have seen all there is to see. Then, when you do go to work, you won't have anything on your mind to worry you."

Jethro became quite an adept at the pool table; then Charlie introduced him to a few friends, and he was initiated into the national game of poker. Jethro proved an apt student, and in a short time

he could shuffle, deal, and bluff with the most adroit of them. Then cards failed to satisfy his yearnings, for the bets were small and his supply of money was getting low. Next Charlie initiated him into the mysteries of faro and roulette. Charlie had proverbially bad luck whenever he played at these games, but from the first luck seemed to have formed a partnership with Jethro. His native shrewdness led him to make his bets small, so that when he lost, he lost but little, but, as he gained the greater part of the time, he accumulated money quite fast, and all thoughts of making a living by honest labour soon vanished from his mind.

One night, with some of his new companions, he went to a Saturday Night Sociable, — a promiscuous dancing party, where ladies were admitted free, while the men paid for their tickets.

What was Jethro's astonishment, in the midst of a quadrille, to find himself face to face with the girl with whom he had been in love, or fancied himself to be in love, when they both lived at North Gayville. Yes, it was Stella Briggs, but not the Stella Briggs of old. Her manner was changed. There was a look in her face that indicated that she, too, had been seeing the sights of the great city.

She was as much astonished at seeing Jethro as he had been at seeing her. She was not in the mood to think of their past acquaintance or to talk about

it. At her partner's request she had partaken several times of wine. She had drunk more than she ought to. She was a sensible girl, and when she realised the fact, it made her angry with herself and with everybody else. For this reason, her meeting with Jethro could not have occurred at a more inopportune moment.

At sight of her, a revulsion of feeling took possession of Jethro. It had not seemed so bad to him when he thought of the life he had been following, but to learn that Stella Briggs, a girl of whom he had thought so much, was treading the same path, affected him deeply. After awhile, he found an opportunity to speak to her alone. When he told her that he loved her, and that if she had stayed at North Gayville, he had intended to ask her to marry him, she only laughed at him.

"A pretty couple we should make. I can tell by looking at you what kind of a life you have been leading. No, Jethro, I don't propose to get married to a man who is worse than I am."

Before Jethro could remonstrate, her partner for the next dance claimed her hand. After the dance was over, Jethro sought through the room for her, but she had gone, and he did not meet her again while he remained in the city.

CHAPTER XVI.

FATHER AND SON.

CHESTER LETHBRIDGE had never received an answer to his letter to Sareta. He wondered at this for awhile, then decided, since she had shown such contempt for his declared love, to do his best to forget her. He learned of her marriage to Lempster merely through a chance meeting with Stephen, for Charles, on his return to the city, had avoided his friend, both through shame, and his wish to keep his marriage a secret from all his old acquaintances.

Then Chester plunged into his law-books, and in their absorption dulled all memories of the past summer. But they were soon to be stirred again. One spring morning his office door opened to admit the tall figure and honest face of Farmer Judkins. Springing to his feet in surprise, Chester greeted the old man cordially, and then asked what he could do for him.

"I'll tell ye," was the reply. "I come down here yesterday to visit my boy Jethro, who's staying in the city this winter. But when I struck his boardin'

house las' night, he wa'n't there, an' no one could tell me where he was, or where he worked daytimes. I stayed in his room overnight, an' waited this mornin' for awhile, but he didn't turn up. Then I thought p'raps you might help me hunt him up, as you know th' city better'n me."

"I'll do what I can, gladly," said Chester. "Now you sit down, and read the morning paper. I have got some court business to attend to, but I will come back as soon as I can, and then we will try and find your son."

When Chester entered the court room, he found that a long row of prisoners, principally young men, were at the bar of justice, charged with gambling, or with being present where gambling was going on.

"If you were older men," he heard the judge say, in a stern but dignified manner, "and had long been addicted to the vice of gambling, I should not send you to prison, for I know it would do no good. In such a case the heaviest fine that the law allows me to impose would be the most effectual punishment, but something must be done to deter you young men from entering, or rather continuing in such a course of life. Mr. Clerk, enter a fine of fifty dollars and imprisonment for thirty days in the House of Correction. In case of appeal, fix the bonds at five hundred dollars."

Chester scanned the faces of the prisoners closely. Surely, there was one that he knew. Where had he seen that young man? When the name came to him, he experienced a sharp revulsion of feeling. The father was sitting in his office, reading the paper, while the son stood in the prisoners' dock, charged with being a gambler.

Some of the prisoners signified their intention of appealing and furnishing bail.

"Thomas Strong," said the clerk, and Jethro stepped forward. Chester took the cue, and stepping to Jethro's side, asked: "Can you furnish bail, Mr. Strong?"

Jethro recognised the questioner, and his glance fell.

"I don't think so," was his reply. "I don't know anybody who would back me for five hundred dollars."

"Have you got any money yourself?"

"Yes, I have eight hundred dollars in the bank," said Jethro. "Will they take money?"

Chester smiled. "Oh, yes, they will take money quicker than anything else. Good money is better than the best bond. Where is your money?"

"I put it in the Fidelity Safe Deposit Vaults," said Jethro, "because one of the boys told me they pay interest on deposits. My bank-book and check-book are up in the trunk in my room, but how am I to get at them?"

"I will fix that," said Chester. "You give me the key to your room and trunk, and a note to your landlady, and I will do the rest."

Mr. Judkins had read the morning paper through and through, and was walking uneasily up and down the room, when the door opened and Chester entered in company with young Jethro.

"I have found him at last," said Chester. "Now I will leave you two together, and you can talk as long as you want to. I have some business that will take me out of the office for a couple of hours, but I won't be gone any longer than that."

For some time, father and son sat regarding each other, but saying nothing. Neither knew exactly how to begin the conversation, but each had a presentiment that it was going to end in a way entirely unexpected to either of them.

"Well, Jethro," said the old man at last, "I cum down to see why you didn't send me that 'ere money that you promised me."

"Well, the fact is, dad," said his son, "I had eight hundred dollars all saved up for you, and safe in the bank, and I intended to send you the money a fortnight ago, but last week I had what they call here a business reverse, and it took five hundred dollars right out of me. Two or three days ago I struck another streak of luck, and yesterday I made good what I had lost. This morning I was going to send you the money for sure."

"Seems kinder funny," remarked the old gentleman, "that a young feller like you, who ain't used to city ways, can come down here and make so much money in such a short time. I never heerd of anything like it afore, and I'm goin' to ask yer a question, Jethro, and you can answer or not jus' as you see fit, but, if you answer me, I want yer to tell me the truth. If you don't say nothin', I can think jus' what I'm a mind ter. Now, what I want to ask yer, Jeth, is how have you made your money?"

"I made it at *rouge et noir* and faro."

"Rooshynor and Pharoh. Are them the folks you work for?"

Jethro felt that it would be better for him to tell the whole truth at once, and receive the reproof that his conduct deserved, than to try to postpone divulging it, in which case his conduct would, undoubtedly, meet with severer condemnation.

"Well, father, since I have been down here, I have been leading a pretty fast life."

The old man nodded his head significantly.

"I got in with the boys, and it wa'n't long before I began to drink. Then I began to play cards for fun; then we played for small stakes at first; then they got bigger, but I was always pretty lucky, and I came out at the top of the heap. That business reverse I just spoke of was a case of bad luck in

which I lost five hundred dollars at faro, but I made it up, and yesterday I put the whole eight hundred dollars in the bank. I was having a game last night when the place was raided by the police, and the whole of us were pulled in. I am out on bail now, but I had to put up five hundred dollars, so as I could come and see you. I have got three hundred dollars left, and you can have that, if it will do you any good."

"What!" thundered the old man, rising to his feet, "have you got such a poor opinion of your old father that you think he would take the wages of sin to pay honest debts with? No, I won't tech a cent of it. I'll go back home, and put a mortgage on the old homestead, and live on corn meal and potatoes until I have paid it off. I can't seem to realise it anyway. Just to think that my boy, Jethro, that I put my trust in, and sent him down to Boston to look for his sister who had run away from home and most broke her father's and mother's hearts, just to think that arter all that had happened, that my boy took to drink and turned gambler. If it hadn't been for them 'ere city boarders, we might all on us be to home now and happy as ever," and the old gentleman pulled out his big bandanna handkerchief and wiped away the tears which he had ineffectually tried to conceal from his son's gaze.

"I won't tech a cent of your money, Jethro," he

continued, "for I have got enough to take us both home. You come with me, and take up your shovel and your hoe to help pay off that mortgage."

"But what shall I do with the three hundred dollars?" asked Jethro.

"Give it to Lawyer Lethbridge," cried the old man. "And if some poor man or woman comes to him for justice and hain't got money to pay for it, have him draw on that money. The only way to use the devil's money is to do good with it. Now, I'm down here, I'm bound to see Sareta. Do you know where she lives?"

Jethro replied that he did.

"Well, then, come along," said his father.

Chester's assistant was sitting at his desk in the reception-room, and young Jethro asked him to tell Mr. Lethbridge, when he returned, that they had gone to see Mrs. Lempster.

Sareta was delighted to see her father, and the pleasure was evidently mutual. She, however, reproached her brother for not coming to see her oftener.

"Why, do you know, father, I haven't laid eyes on Jethro for more than a month."

The old gentleman was on the point of saying that Jethro had written home that he took dinner with his sister every day, but then he reflected that if a man drinks and gambles, it is only natural for him to tell lies, too.

“You must stay to dinner with me, father,” said Sareta. “I am sorry that I can’t keep you overnight, but the only spare room that I have is let to a lodger.”

“Oh, that will be all right,” said Jethro. “I will take father up to my room nights, and he can come round and spend to-morrow with you.”

So matters were thus arranged, and Mr. Judkins had a most enjoyable time during the remainder of his stay in the city. His daughter was dressed nicely, her apartments were well furnished, and he felt satisfied that, after all, Sareta had made a pretty good match.

Mr. Lempster was not at home, nor did he return in time to meet his father-in-law. “He travels for a business house,” said Sareta to her father, “and he is often away a week or a fortnight at a time. I was very lonesome at first, but now I look forward to his return, and am so much the happier when he gets back.”

After his first dinner with his daughter, Mr. Judkins accompanied his son to his lodgings in Stony Brook Street. There the old gentleman reverted to the events of the day and to his son’s past reprehensible career. Young Jethro felt that he had done all that he could, under the circumstances, to explain matters, and his anger rose.

“You say, dad, that I ought to be ashamed of

myself. Well, I have told you that I am ashamed of myself, and I am sorry for what I have done, but it is all over now, and I don't think it is quite fair to rub it in too hard."

"Yes," continued his father, "but what will your grandfather and grandmother say when I go home and tell 'em what you have been up to?"

"Well, to tell the truth," said Jethro, "and I hope you won't be offended, dad, by my saying so, I suppose 'Ram will supply me with Scriptural quotations for a month or two after I get back, and grandma will say that she knew that what has happened was sure to take place, judging from what 'Bijah told her when he got back from Boston."

His son's words might have led him to administer a further reproof, but the manner in which they were uttered so distinctly recalled the persons to whom they referred that he burst into a hearty laugh, and all thought of further recrimination vanished from his mind.

The next day, while taking dinner with his daughter and son, Mr. Judkins gave an account of one of his adventures after his arrival in the city.

"You see," he said, "I asked a feller how to get to the street Jeth lived on, and he pinte'd out an alley-way and said if I went through there, I'd get there so much the quicker. I hadn't gone far before I cum on two youngsters, about knee high to a grass-hopper, whacking away at each other like a couple

of drovers. There was a lot of women screaming at the tops of their voices: 'Stop your fighting! Stop your fighting!' and one old woman yelled out: 'Can't you stop them boys a-fightin'?'

"I kinder thought I could, so I fetched one on 'em a crack on his ear that I'll warrant you made him see stars, and sent him a-sprawlin', and I gave the other a hist that sent him home quicker than he ever did an errand for his mother. Then the other little fellers that had been watchin' the set-to began callin' me bad names, and wigwagging their fingers at me, but I knew I had done the right thing. I could hear 'Ram say, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.'

"I had just about got those words through my mind, and was congraterlatin' myself on being considerable of a constable, when I heerd a woman yell: 'I guess that will stop your fightin', and down come a hull washtub full of dirty soap-suds all over me. I didn't stop to do any more peace-makin', but looked round for a sunny place to dry myself, for I was wetter'n a drowned rat."

That evening father and son took the cars for North Gayville, each with a set purpose in his mind. The father proposed to raise the money to pay his honest debts by putting a mortgage on the old homestead, while the son resolved, by his labour, to aid his father in removing this financial incumbrance as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE STAGE.

AFTER Stella left the Skiltons, she served in three other families, but with little satisfaction to herself. In the first, she was given more work than one girl could possibly do; in the second, she underwent an experience similar to that at the Skiltons; at the third, she was overheard mimicking, as a relief to her feelings, her fussy and affected mistress, who, furious at her maid's mockery, and at the amusement of the other servants, discharged Stella at a day's notice, after a tirade which ended, "You are better fitted for the music-hall than the servants' hall."

That night Stella had gone to the dance-hall where she had met Jethro. The unexpectedness and the unpleasantness of that meeting, the reaction of the wine she had taken, and the loss of her place, all wrought her up to such a nervous condition that she slipped quickly away from the dance to her own room, where she flung herself on the bed in a flood of tears.

The next morning, after she had performed her duties for the last time, and had prepared to leave, she picked up the morning paper and eagerly scanned its "Want" columns. In heavy, black letters, this item stood out before her eyes:

"Wanted, for a New Burlesque, fifty young and pretty girls, with good figures and voices. Previous experience unnecessary. Apply at the stage-door of the American Theatre to-day at 11 A. M."

That notice, with the remembrance of her mistress's last words, settled Stella's future plans. She felt confident of possessing all the requirements of the advertisement, and resolved to test that confidence at once.

At eleven sharp, she reached the stage-door of the American Theatre, or rather, a point some hundred feet away, between which and the stage-door hovered flocks and bevies of femininity. There were dark girls and light girls, tall girls and short girls, pretty girls and unpretty girls; some dressed smartly, some plainly, some shabbily, — all pushing, crowding, and chattering. Stella felt dazed and overpowered at first, but soon recovered herself, and, when the door opened, rushed in as boldly as the rest, and lost no time in slipping through a convenient gap to a very advantageous position in the crowd, which swarmed on the stage. In one corner stood a dingy upright piano, a table, and a

few chairs; by the former sat the accompanist, by the latter the stage-manager and an assistant or two.

When the noise of the rush subsided, the manager beckoned to the girl nearest him. As she came forward, he looked her over with an appraising stare, and then shook his head. "Sorry, too slight." The second girl passed the ordeal of looks, and was requested to sing, but had barely warbled four bars before she was stopped with thanks. "Go 'way back and sit down!" murmured some irrepressible voice in the line.

The third was luckier; she was allowed to finish her song, and then told to stand aside and wait for the rehearsal. The fourth was rejected as being neither young nor pretty, and then came Stella. She faced the battery of the manager's eyes with an air of piquant defiance that apparently won his approval, for, as he asked her to sing, he turned to his assistant with a comment of "Neat little party, that."

Stella recalled a popular air she had once sung for her fellow servants — a humorous Irish song. Her voice was sweet though untrained, and full of a latent mirth, which her mimicry of the brogue intensified. The manager let her sing two verses, watching her intently, and then declared, "All right, my dear, *you'll* do! Next, please."

Stella stood aside, her head swimming with happiness, and began chatting, first with her equally fortunate companion, then with the others who were added to the elect, which, after a couple of hours, reached the required number. Then the untried, disappointed ones hurried away, and the manager proceeded to instruct his recruits in the first steps of their histrionic journey.

Stella's rendering of the Irish song had won her a special place in the ranks. She was appointed one of a squad of twelve, who were to accompany the comedian in one of his songs, "When Biddy Mooney Clanes the House," with a rollicking chorus and a vigorous obligato of mop and brush. These twelve, with as many other girls, who comprised the rest of the special squads, were the most attractive of the crowd, and, consequently, stood in the front row whenever the chorus appeared in ensemble work.

The girls were to receive twenty dollars a week, but were not paid until the burlesque was produced. Fortunately, Stella had saved enough money from her last position to tide her over this period of financial inactivity, which lasted a fortnight. It was a period of steady rehearsing, — hard, unwearying drudgery, the constant repetition of songs, steps, and dances, until Stella felt (as did all her companions) that her limbs must collapse, or her

voice wear itself into a shred. The last two days of rehearsing, however, became less irksome. The girls were quicker to catch points, and were rapidly being drilled into shape. The manager could polish up his special squads, and soon was able to calculate just which acts would be most successful.

"Now, that Washerwoman's Chorus," he said to his assistant, "is going to be a good one. Every one of that gang is full of life, and the little one on the left, Miss Briggs, is the liveliest of the bunch. Just watch that dozen bring down the house." To "that dozen," however, he was careful not to say such encouraging words, knowing that the best way to perfect a new and rehearsing chorus is by frank and merciless criticism.

At length the opening night came. The overture was being played, the chorus was gathered behind the curtain, ready for the first number. In their midst, the manager shot a parting word at them: "Give 'em ginger, all of you, and plenty of it!" and then ran into the wings just before the curtain rose.

Stella had been in a quivering tremor until now, but, with the manager's words, and at the sight of the flashing lights and the brilliant, crowded house, all her fears vanished. Clad in the kirtle and bodice of a peasant girl, she tripped on with her companions. The number ended with a whirling waltz,

which was demanded again. Stella felt her spirits begin to rise, and in their exuberance, stirred the front rows with a series of dexterous and graceful twirls.

The manager's words, "Give 'em ginger!" seemed to spur her on to her best efforts. In the chorus of the king's entrance song she mimicked the pomposity of the monarch, in the refrain of the heroine's love-song she imitated that lady's lackadaisical airs, both in a way that drew the eyes of the house upon her; and when, at the end of the first act, she cake-walked off with her partner, the front rows were buzzing to each other, "Keep your eye on the little one on the left, she's a ripper!"

The manager was delighted with the spirit and abandon of the chorus, whom Stella's exhilaration had infected, and told them to keep the good work up. They did so, Stella leading and outshining them all. Her fresh, spontaneous buoyancy caught the house's attention further and further; they applauded every movement she made, and when, at the end of the second act (a scene of Saturnalian revelry), she suddenly lifted her dainty foot and kicked off her partner's cap, they burst into a tumult of hand-clapping.

The third act began with the "Washerwoman's Chorus." The comedian, aided by the twelve girls, went through the song with snap and vim. One,

two, three, four encores were demanded. For the fifth time the chorus came on, and the orchestra struck up the prelude.

The comedian, however, had collapsed behind the scenes, completely exhausted. Stella had noticed this, and, quick as a flash, in a mood of elation beyond all control, she darted forward and began the first verse. She copied to the life the comedian's brogue, gestures, and mannerisms. The chorus were amazed, the manager and comedian stupefied. But the audience were shrieking with laughter, and, at the end of the verse, rose up in their seats, shouting, "Hurrah! bravo! encore!" Then a clear, boyish voice rang out, "Good work, Miss Frou-Frou!" It was young Skilton.

In a second, the crowd had taken up the cry, and, as Stella quickly fled behind the scenes, kept calling, "Miss Frou-Frou! We want Miss Frou-Frou!" They drowned all further stage-action by their shouts. Finally, Stella came on, led by the comedian, whose appreciation had conquered his chagrin, made a dashing curtsy, and then rushed back into the wings. There she met the manager, who, intending to upbraid her for her forwardness, found himself warmly praising her cleverness. "After all," he said, "it was the best thing that could have happened." Then he abruptly queried, "Why did they all keep calling you Miss Frou-Frou?"

"That's a nickname that was given me by the young man who first called it out," breathlessly explained Stella. "I used to work for his people, and, when I didn't like what was said to me, I used to swish my dress. I couldn't do it now," she laughed, glancing down at her abbreviated attire.

"Well, my dear, that's the name we'll bill you under, and I'll give you a small part in the show from now on. You imitated that chap so well that you'd better have a specialty in that line. I'll see you about it to-morrow. Now run along for the wind-up."

Stella danced out on the stage for the grand finale, where she was greeted with bursts of applause, far surpassing that given the principals. Three times the final curtain rose and fell, and, when the house finally dispersed, it was in a furore of cheers for that piquant little girl, the phoenix of the chorus — "Miss Frou-Frou."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FALLING STAR.

THE next morning, when the manager interviewed Stella, he hardly needed to inform her that she had made herself famous. Nearly every morning paper had written glowing accounts of her ovation the previous night; and he had been besieged by reporters, clamouring for her biography, and by young men about town clamouring for an introduction to her. "You're a celebrity now, young lady," he concluded, "and it's up to me to double your pay, to keep you with me, the first thing. The next is to hear some of your take-offs on other celebrities."

Stella, who, during her stay in the city, had been to the theatre every chance she could get, and had closely observed the most prominent actors and actresses, gave him a few imitations of various stars. He was particularly pleased with one of a popular comic opera singer, who, during the play, conveyed the intimation that she had been drinking too much champagne.

"That's just the thing, Miss Frou-Frou, and we'll have you give it to-night in the carnival scene, where it'll fit finely."

That night Stella played her new part with as much vivacity, and to as enthusiastic a welcome as on the night before.

For a month the company stayed in the city, where Stella was hailed as the success of the season, and where she plunged into what was, for her, a life of great excitement and dissipation. The company was composed largely of young men and women new to the life, and who had looked forward to it as one of continual enjoyment. Besides the convivial gatherings arranged by members of the company, there were continual invitations to suppers after the performance at the theatre, and to many receptions and social gatherings. Stella charmed all by her beauty, her powers as a mimic, her vocal ability, and her brightness and vivacity in conversation. In fact, she was the life of every gathering which she attended.

Then, when the company took the road, those gay evenings still continued, as the approach of Miss Frou-Frou had been heralded among the towns and cities they visited, and Stella still found herself the central figure of the lively wine suppers and parties. At these suppers were always served wines and other stimulating drinks, and Stella found

that her liking for them, first started at the Skiltons, but which had apparently vanished after she had left there, was as strong as ever. She found, as many have done, that she was exhilarated by their use, although accompanied by an unpleasant depression the next day.

The long hours and late suppers, the undue nervous excitement caused by her constant indulgence in stimulants, and the continual excitement due to the glare and glitter of the stage soon left their marks on even her strong constitution, but she was buoyed up, for a time, by the very excitement.

Her photographs were placed in the shops, and there was a great demand for them. Her portrait appeared in the newspapers, accompanied by fictitious biographies, for to no reporters would she disclose any real facts of her past life. Poems and sonnets "To Stella" appeared in many papers, and she experienced all the pleasure that can be derived from notoriety, for she knew that she had done nothing to make herself famous.

Despite the social excesses in which she indulged, she possessed one anchor which kept her from departing far from the narrow path, despite the incessant temptations. She knew in her heart that she did not love Jethro Judkins, but he had said that he loved her, and she believed him. For this reason, she felt herself, in some way, bound to him, and was true to him in thought and deed.

But there could be but one ending to the life which she was leading, and it soon came. She experienced a nervous collapse, and found herself obliged to resort to stimulants before the performance as well as after it. Thousands of spectators, who applauded her acting, never imagined that her exquisite mimicry was due on many occasions to a condition approaching very nearly to actual intoxication.

She was soon to suffer from a new cause, or combination of causes. The long and tedious trips by railway and steamboat, the frequent detentions due to accidents and to storms, with their consequent exposure, rehearsing in cold theatres, together with the poorly cooked food obtained at irregular intervals, brought on a physical decline, both in appearance and health. She gave a great sigh of relief when the company closed its season at Troy, and the members dispersed to their homes.

For some reason, which she could not explain herself, Stella considered Boston to be her home, and thither she went. She was a physical wreck when she arrived, but hoped that rest and her absence from the usual daily temptations would soon restore her health. She had earned a great deal of money, but had been extravagant in her outlay. She counted what remained, and found that, by close economy, she could live during the three

months which would intervene before the opening of the next theatrical season. She would go, she said to herself, into some quiet country town, where she was not known, and where board was cheap, and she would soon be herself again.

On the second morning after her arrival, she found, to her surprise and dismay, that she was too weak to rise from her bed. She was obliged to send for a physician. He told her that it was a case of nervous prostration, and that it would be several months before she would be able to resume her duties. He wrote several prescriptions, the cost of which made quite an inroad into her savings. At the end of a month, there was but little improvement in her condition. She asked the doctor for his bill, and, after paying it, found she had barely enough to pay for her board and lodging for a fortnight.

In her extremity, she thought of applying to her manager to make an advance of her next season's salary. On inquiry, she found that he had gone to Europe in search of a new attraction and a new star for his company. Then the depressing thought came to her that such an appeal would have been useless.

"If he should see me now," she said to herself, "he would not think that I could ever be pretty again."

She tried her voice, and found that it had lost much of its scope and strength. Then she broke down completely, and cried bitterly over her past folly.

The end of the fortnight came all too soon, and Stella found herself reduced to her last dollar. She went to the restaurant where she took her meals, and ordered her supper, but she could eat little of it. She felt that she could not return to her dingy little room, and face the future there. The past, with its so-called joys, had vanished. The present was miserable enough, and the future showed no signs of hope.

Aimlessly she walked along a thronged thoroughfare, noticing nothing, and caring little where she went. Suddenly her attention was attracted by the sound of a band. A procession was approaching from a side street. She stopped to look and listen, and smiled to herself when she found that the procession was of members of the Salvation Army. It was followed by the usual motley crowd that assembles in its wake.

An impulse seized her to join them, and, falling into the last line of followers, she marched blindly along, through streets, lanes, and alleys, into a little chapel at the end of a narrow court. Mechanically she took a seat in the rear of the hall, and, leaning back in a state of weariness and feverish

despair, kept moaning to herself, "Oh, what shall I do next? Oh, if I only could end it all!"

The star had indeed fallen from its dazzling heights into the lowest and darkest depths.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MOTHER'S CRY.

STEPHEN HOLTON was ambitious, was always looking forward to the time when he would occupy a wider field of usefulness. It was this feeling that had led him to accept the invitation to preach at the Riverside Avenue Church, the results of which undertaking had been so disastrous that they had led him to reproach himself for his vanity. It was about a year since his return from North Gayville, and nearly three years since he had begun his labours in the slum district. It had become hard for him to supply novelties for his evening socials. The population of the district changed its character but little, few new residents coming into it. Those who lived there had listened to his words so often that, no doubt, they had become wearied. Stephen felt sure of this fact by the marked falling off in attendance.

One morning his eye lighted upon the statement in a newspaper that the Salvation Army proposed to engage a hall, and establish a division of their

work in what was known as the Minton Street slum district.

"The hand of God is in it," said Stephen. "The work is not to be given up, but is to be transferred to others, who, by their numbers, will be able to accomplish much more good than I ever could alone."

The article stated that Capt. Henry Claxton was to be in charge of the new division, and Stephen lost no time in seeking him.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Holton," said Captain Claxton. "I have been connected with Headquarters for some time, and I can assure you that it has been our regard for you and your labours that has kept us so long from beginning work in the district in which you have done so much good."

"Have you secured a hall yet?"

"No," the captain replied, "I have looked at many rooms, but none of them are large enough, or located in just the situation that we desire."

"Can you come with me, and see my little chapel?"

Captain Claxton said that he would be pleased to do so. After inspecting it, he remarked: "It is exactly the location that I would have selected, and your chapel is admirably fitted for our needs. Can it be hired?"

"We will see Mr. Cressy," said Stephen.

Mr. Cressy was pleased to learn that the chapel could be leased to those who would occupy it permanently, and fixed a price for rental which Captain Claxton thought was very moderate. The matter was carried to Headquarters, and with some slight changes, the details were approved, and an evening was fixed for its dedication by the officers and members of the Salvation Army.

On the morning of the last day that Stephen was to remain in possession of the Bethany Mission Chapel, he had a call from Captain Claxton.

"I have come to ask you a favour, Mr. Holton. We shall dedicate our new quarters to-morrow evening. It has been suggested to me by Colonel Morrison, who is in charge of the department, that an invitation be extended to you to assist us in our opening services."

"What can I do?"

"You can speak upon that subject, your views upon which are so well known and have given you so much renown, the question of intemperance. But as you know, Mr. Holton, our audiences are always restive, and expect frequent changes in the programme; so it is not necessary to suggest that your remarks be condensed, and take but little in point of time."

The evening for the dedication arrived. The usual preliminary parade through the streets of the

district had been made, during which the band had played well-known religious and popular airs, and the lads and lassies had sung their songs with their usual vigour and earnestness. When the band reached the corner of Minton Street and Mission Place, the crowd which followed the members of the Army was numbered by hundreds, comprising both young and old.

Colonel Morrison, the department commander, opened the exercises with an address, at the close of which he delivered the keys and committed the charge of the division to Captain Claxton. The captain then took the platform, and followed with a short speech, in which he outlined the proposed work of the Army. The chapel was to be kept open every day and evening; a home for women was to be established, and also a rescue home for girls. In time, as the work progressed, would be added a hotel for men, a lunch-room, and a second-hand store. He then referred in the most complimentary terms to the work which had been done, and the good which had been accomplished by the Reverend Mr. Holton, who had had charge of the Mission Chapel for the past three years, and informed them that the latter would take part in the exercises that evening.

At the end of his speech, an old woman, who had occupied one of the front seats, rose to her feet,

and advanced to the platform. Ever ready and willing to hear any case of distress, as hers seemed to be, Captain Claxton stepped down from the platform, and listened to the story which she told him. He nodded approvingly, and kindly led the woman back to her seat. He ascended the platform, and called upon the Army to sing the song entitled "Power Divine."

"Power, dear Saviour, new power I crave,
Power to suffer, to toil and to save;
Hearken, O Lord, to my heart's deep prayer,
Grant me more power to do and to dare."

During the singing, Captain Claxton conversed in an earnest manner with the Reverend Mr. Holton, and when the song was ended, introduced that gentleman to the audience.

"My friends," Stephen began, "your captain kindly invited me to address you upon a subject with which I have become, to some extent, identified, — the subject of intemperance. That I shall be pleased to do, if there is time later in the evening, but a more urgent matter has been brought to my attention by your captain, and at his request I shall state the case to you.

"A mother who has lost her daughter has come here, and in an impassioned voice has uttered a cry for us to find her lost child, and return her to her loving arms. She has long searched for her wan-

dering daughter, and has strayed in vain through the streets, both by day and night. She has threaded her way through the crowds of sin's poor victims, who have gone laughing by. Her eye has grown weary with looking, and night after night she has gone back to her lonely home with an almost breaking heart.

"It is, no doubt, true that her daughter was wild and restless and thoughtless, but even these cannot alter a mother's love for her child. The soul of this young girl was pure, and she thought that the words spoken by her deceiver were true, but, as is always the case, a cloud of shame hangs over this poor girl's head, but no word of blame is attached to the one who has wronged her. I have seen so many instances of the strength and depth of a mother's love that I know that this poor mother who has cried to you for help would give her own life, if the wrong to her beloved daughter could be undone. Alone, to-night, in the streets of this great city, this poor girl is probably wandering, friendless and unprotected. This mother's cry is that a pitying hand may be stretched out to her daughter, and that the brand of the lost one may be removed from her brow. She wishes us to pray that her daughter's feet may be led to a home of love. My friends, I ask you to join with me in prayer."

As Stephen began his invocation, every eye in the assemblage was fixed upon him.

"Oh, God, from thy throne of justice look down upon us, and hear this mother's cry. See what the despoiler has done to a gem of thy crown. Her place is empty, and the home of which she was once the life and joy is sad. But, Lord, thou knowest that she was led astray, and on the Judgment Day the angels will plead her cause before the throne of justice."

During the prayer, the poor mother, overcome by her feelings, had risen to her feet, and started to once more reach the platform, but her strength suddenly left her, and she sank upon her knees. Claspings her hands in the attitude of prayer, she remained there, while the tears trickled down her cheek.

"O my God! I cannot stand this."

The cry came from the rear of the hall, and all eyes were turned in that direction. A young girl, once beautiful, and still retaining much of her youthful charm, forced her way through the crowd, and going rapidly down the aisle fell upon her knees and threw her arms about her mother's neck. A shout arose from the members of the Army, which was taken up and repeated again and again. Several lassies sprang forward, and the mother and daughter were assisted to arise. Then Captain

Claxton suggested that two sisters accompany the reunited mother and daughter to their home.

Song followed song, for that seemed to be the way in which the members of the Army and the audience most desired to express their delight at the happy result which had followed the mother's cry for help.

Captain Claxton then announced that Mr. Holton would give a short talk on intemperance. In a few swift, telling sentences Stephen drew a vivid picture of some of the evils caused by that vice, and of what he deemed the most fitting and effective means to gradually stamp it out.

"I am not looking for the millenium in these days," he said, in conclusion. "My only hope is to reach it by a series of progressive stages. As I have said on many occasions, the first step is to banish the saloons and close their doors for ever. The next step is to develop the self-respect of the drunkard. No one who is temperate respects a drunkard, and he cannot respect himself. After his self-respect is restored, his will power must be developed, so as to retain the advantage thus secured, but what aid can be called to our assistance? The only power that will help in this dire extremity is aid from on high. We must appeal to Heaven for help to restore to the drunkard his self-respect, and to give him the power of will to say *no!* to the demands of his abnormal appetite.

"I have no doubt that in this large congregation here assembled there are many who were present, or who remember those war meetings which were held when the life of our country was in danger. It was the custom for those in charge to call for those who were willing to go to war to come forward and put down their names. We are now in danger from another cause, and I will call for those who are willing to join in a war against intemperance to come forward and put down their names. Let those who are suffering from this curse come forward, and I will utter a prayer to Heaven that the help which you so much need may be given you."

There was a commotion in the crowd. Many men and women rose to their feet, of whom the greater portion afterward sat down, but six men and three women came slowly forward and formed in line before the platform, upon which the speaker stood.

Then a prayer, richer in thought, stronger in words, and more potent in its effect upon the minds of those who listened, than had been uttered in behalf of the mother who had lost her daughter, rose from his lips. As he closed with the word "Amen," it was repeated by hundreds of voices throughout the room. But, hardly had it escaped from his lips than, with a moan, followed by a low, agonised cry, a young girl, who stood at the end

of the line farthest from the speaker, fell in a dead swoon on the floor. Several sisters rushed forward and raised her, holding her tenderly in their arms.

For an instant it seemed as though Stephen, too, would lose command of himself and fall prostrate, as he gazed upon her face. The hard and sinister lines there had vanished, but, in their place, were those which indicated misery and suffering and want; the fair curls were straggling and disordered; the violet-blue eyes were, no doubt, there, but the reddened lids were closed over them. The face into which he looked was that of Stella Briggs!

CHAPTER XX.

THE TEMPERANCE EVANGELIST.

ONE lassie stepped quickly forward. She knelt beside Stella, and lifting her head tenderly from the floor, supported it upon her arm, while she fanned her vigorously with a copy of the *War Cry*, which she happened to have in her hand. Another lassie brought some cold water with which she bathed Stella's forehead, while two others rubbed her hands vigorously, to restore circulation.

"What's the matter? Is she drunk?" called out a harsh, unsympathetic voice from among the crowd. One of the Army lads said: "Better take her to the Rescue Home," while another said, in an undertone to his companion: "I guess she's been on a regular spree."

"My friends," said Stephen, and all listened attentively to his words, "I don't think that this is a simple drunken fit. I look upon it as a case of physical exhaustion. I do not know the young lady personally, but I know who she is, and I have met her father. If one of you will kindly telephone

for the ambulance at the Emergency Hospital, my friend, Doctor Glines, will attend to her needs."

It seemed a long time before the ambulance arrived, but soon the welcome news was received that it was at the corner of Mission Place and Minton Street. During the wait, Stella had opened her eyes once. She had not seemed to realise her condition, and had closed them again immediately. Stephen took Stella up in his arms, and carried her down to the ambulance. The whole crowd followed him, and it was evident that it would be impossible to conduct any further services that evening. One lassie volunteered to accompany Stella to the hospital. Stephen returned to the chapel, and entering what had so long been his little study, called up Doctor Glines, and gave him an account of his acquaintance with the patient, who was now on her way to the hospital. He told him that he would call the next day and inquire as to her condition.

Until noon the next day Stephen was in a state of dread suspense. He had recognised it as a case of physical exhaustion. She might have died before arriving at the hospital. Perhaps the restoratives had been of no avail. Half a dozen times he had been on the point of telephoning to inquire whether she were alive or not, but he felt that his slight acquaintance with Stella did not warrant him in manifesting so much interest.

When he arrived at the hospital, he found that Doctor Glines was out, but his assistant told him that Miss Briggs was somewhat better. Upon her arrival they had administered restoratives, but when she had fully recovered her senses, she positively refused to swallow some brandy which they offered her. "She is in a very low condition," said the assistant, "and it will take some time for her to recover."

There was an interval of three days before Stephen again visited the hospital. This time he met Doctor Glines, who invited him into his private office.

"I say, Mr. Holton, your young friend does not pick up as fast as she ought to. If you will pardon me for speaking frankly, I think she has something on her mind. Her trouble is mental more than physical. I think if you will go in and have a talk with her, it will do her more good than medicine."

When Stephen entered the room in which Stella had been placed, the nurse withdrew. He seated himself in a chair beside the bed, and looked at her. Her eyes were closed. Some kind friend evidently had sent some flowers to the hospital, and the nurse had given Stella a rose, which she clasped tightly in her hand. Stephen remembered a rose-bush which he had once seen after a severe storm. It was bent over and many of its branches were

broken. The petals of its blossoms were torn away ruthlessly by the wind, and it had presented a sadly forlorn appearance, but a gardener took it in hand. He restored it to an upright position; he clipped off the broken branches, and placed moist earth upon their ends. The torn and disfigured flowers were removed. An evening later its buds had opened and it seemed as beautiful as ever. To Stephen it seemed as though Stella, like the rose-tree, had been struck by the storm. At first, she had only been bent by it, but finally she had fallen, broken in heart and spirit. Was he to be the gardener to give her counsel and aid, to enable her again to stand erect in her proud womanhood, and become once more as beautiful as she had formerly been?

Suddenly Stella opened her eyes, and a startled look came into them. "Why, Mr. Holton, I didn't know you were here."

"I must beg your pardon for my intrusion," said Stephen, "but I came at the suggestion of your physician. He thought if I made you a little call, and had a talk with you, that it might make you feel better."

"Tell me," asked Stella, "how did you know my name? Doctor Glines said that you telephoned to him that my name was Stella Briggs."

"That's almost a story in itself. A college chum of mine was pastor of a little church in a little town in Maine, where I passed my summer vacation."

"Was it North Gayville?" asked Stella, showing for the first time marked signs of animation and interest.

"Yes," replied Stephen, smiling slightly at her earnestness. "While there I saw your father, and learned something about you and your reasons for leaving home."

"Did they say anything good about me?" asked Stella, with a slight touch of bitterness in her tone.

"Well, to speak frankly," said Stephen, "the one who supplied me with the information was not altogether complimentary in her remarks, and, from what I heard about her, I don't feel warranted in placing implicit reliance in what she said."

"That must have been Mrs. Willcutt," and just the shadow of a smile stole over Stella's face. "She used to like me very much," said the young girl, "but she turned against me after I told Frank Willcutt, her son, that I would not marry him."

"The general opinion seems to be," said Stephen, "that you left home because you had a quarrel with your father."

"I think it best for me to tell you just how it was," said Stella. "My father obliged me to stand behind the counter, and serve liquor to his customers. I loathed the smell of the liquor, and the sight of the men who drank it, but I had promised my mother before she died that I would stay with my

father and do all that I could to help him. But my principal troubles came from another cause. I went to all the parties and dances and social affairs held in the town and in those surrounding, and the young fellows were my escorts, sometimes one, sometimes another. I liked to go, but I was not in love with any one of them, but they kept proposing to me, and I was obliged to refuse them. Then those who had professed to love me so much became my enemies, and circulated all sorts of stories about me. Finally, Jethro Judkins proposed to me. I liked him better than I had any of the others, but I told him I didn't love him and could not marry him—at least, then. I knew that if I was engaged to him and it became known, that all those who considered that they had been jilted by me would turn against him. This was my real reason for leaving home, but I could not say so, so I brought on, by my own will, a bitter quarrel with my father, which ended in his telling me to leave the house and never to show my face in it again.”

After a pause, she asked: “Did any one else ever tell you anything about me?”

Stephen thought it best that the whole truth should be brought out at once, so he replied: “I met Mrs. Skilton, and she told me something.”

“What did she say?” the girl asked, eagerly.

“What she said amounted to this: that you had

used improper language to her husband, and that he had discharged you."

"I told her in my letter," said Stella, "that he would, no doubt, give her a true reason for my leaving. But it was not so, Mr. Holton," and a faint flush came to her cheeks. Then she told what had occurred in Mr. Skilton's sitting-room after she had taken the empty goblet from the table. Stephen thought how easy it was for people of position and wealth to blast for ever the moral characters of those whom they employ, and who are helpless to meet and refute their statements.

"But what have you done since leaving Mr. Skilton's?" asked Stephen. "I hope you do not think I am too inquisitive in making the inquiry."

"Oh, no," said Stella, "I think it will do me good to tell you all about my life. It has been a misspent one so far, and I wish so much that I could leave it all behind me."

As she related it, Stephen felt that surely the time had come for him to point out the right road to this young girl, and assist her to walk therein.

"It was the hand of God that directed you to the Mission," said Stephen, after she had concluded, "and I hope, as his humble instrument, that I may be able to assist you so that you can break away from your old life, and enter upon a new and happier one. But we have talked a long time, and you look

weary. I will come to see you again in about a week."

Stephen found that a great change for the better had taken place when he next visited Stella. The nurse had arranged her hair in a most becoming manner. It looked to Stephen as it had done when he had first seen her. Her eyes had lost their lustreless look, and were bright once more. Not one rose, but three she held in her hand this time, and it seemed to Stephen that the colour upon her cheek almost vied with that of the flowers.

"You are much better," said Stephen.

"Oh, yes, nurse says I may sit up for awhile to-morrow, and if I progress as rapidly as I have done during the past week, I shall be able to go —"

"Home," she had started to say, but "to go out" were the words which she spoke.

They conversed for a short time on general subjects. Then Stephen asked where she had lived before she came to the hospital. Stella gave him the address. When he left her, he promised to come at the end of another week. He found that the landlady had put all of Stella's belongings in her trunk, had locked it, removed it to the attic, and held the key until the room rent was paid.

"I could not let my room stand vacant," said she, "because I am a poor woman, and it is hard to make both ends meet. I held it for her a week."

"That is more than many landladies would have done," remarked Stephen. He paid the rent for the room, and said that he would send for the trunk in a few days.

The next time he visited the hospital, he told Stella that he had come to take her out for a short drive. She accompanied him willingly, for she had yearned to get outside and breathe the fresh air and see the blue sky once more. But she was to be greatly surprised. The carriage drew up before a railway station. She saw her trunk left at the baggage window, and Mr. Holton take a check for it. She accompanied him wonderingly. They took their seats in the train, and it dashed on between green fields, over blue rivers, and by thick growths of forest trees.

Stephen had told Stella's story, without mentioning her name, to a wealthy person who had assisted him in his mission work, and had obtained enough money to pay for a month's board for Stella in the country. He told her what he had done, as the train sped along, and she felt that she had no right to object. They left the cars at an old-fashioned country station, and were driven in the depot carriage to a small farmhouse. At the back of the house was a large pond, while from the front a glimpse of the ocean could be obtained between the trees.

The landlady, a Mrs. Mosier, welcomed Stella in a motherly way that made her feel at home at once. Then a young, bright-looking, healthy country girl entered the room, and was introduced as her only daughter, Lida.

"I think you will have a nice time here, my dear," said Mrs. Mosier to Stella. "You can go fishing on the pond, or out rowing, for we have a boat. The ocean is not far away, if you like salt-water bathing. Lida can drive a horse as well as a man, and better than some, and she will take you through some great growths of pine-trees, for they say breathing the pine air is a mighty good thing for sick folk."

"I have brought you some books to read," said Stephen to Stella, when they were alone, "and I have taken the liberty to put in among them a copy of the pamphlet containing the sermons which I preached at the Riverside Avenue Church. Perhaps you will find time to read them."

During the three weeks which followed, Stella gained steadily in strength and buoyancy of spirits. At the end of that time, Stephen again appeared upon the scene. He told her that he had come down to have a week's vacation himself, for Mrs. Mosier had a spare room which he could occupy. Stella acknowledged to herself that she had never passed so happy a time as during the week when Mr.

Holton was her companion. They went to ride, Mrs. Mosier and her daughter being of the party, but Stephen enjoyed most rowing upon the pond, and on such occasions Stella alone accompanied him.

One day he had rowed to the farther end of the pond, and was returning homeward, when he directed the course of the boat within the shade formed by some overhanging trees, and, lifting the oars, allowed the boat to drift slowly along.

"What are you going to do, Miss Briggs, when you return to Boston?" he asked, abruptly.

Stella flushed. Then she said, "Pardon me, Mr. Holton, but I have enjoyed myself so much that I have grown very selfish, and to tell the truth, I have not given a thought to to-morrow."

"I am glad that you have not," said Stephen, "for I have been thinking a great deal about it, and have come to a conclusion. If you had also come to one, they might not have agreed. You are to choose a new life, and so am I. The future is before me, but I am obliged to mark out my plan of life and follow it. It is my ambition to go out into the world with my new gospel of temperance which differs in many ways from the one usually preached. Has your illness impaired your voice?"

"It did at first," Stella replied, "but the other day I sang some songs for Lida, and my voice seemed as good as ever."

"Then perhaps the proposition that I am going to make to you may be acceptable. As I said, I am going to lecture upon temperance, but I need an assistant, one who can play the piano and sing temperance songs. As in my mission work, printed copies of the choruses will be distributed among the audience, and they will be asked to join in that part of the song. Do you think that you would be willing to go with me, and help me in my work?"

"I can think of no life that could offer me greater attractions, no work that could please me more," was Stella's reply.⁴

The next day Stephen and Stella made a trip to the beach. Stephen tied the horse to a tree, the branches of which shielded him from the hot rays of the sun. Then they wandered along the shore, picking up gaudily coloured pebbles and shells.

Coming to a rocky section of the beach, they clambered up, and, finding a shady retreat, sat down and gazed out upon the sea. It stretched as far as the eye could reach, its most distant extremity forming a dark line against the blue sky. For a time neither spoke.

"The ocean," said Stephen, "always seems to me to be a picture of human life. See how peacefully and quietly those waves follow one another, and break softly upon the sandy beach. They represent the lives of those fortunate ones who through-

out their earthly existence meet with few great troubles and receive no stern blows from the hand of fate."

Looking in another direction, he said: "See that sand-bar over there. That, to me, exemplifies the troubles and trials which come to man. The water surmounts the sand-bar, as man does his troubles, for you see the waves, after passing the obstruction, move on toward the shore. And see those waves as they break against the rocks. They are thrown back by the resistance, but recover themselves and go forward once more, only to be thrown back again by a force which they cannot overcome. So man meets in life troubles and difficulties which his best endeavour fails to surmount."

There was a moment of silence, for the words just spoken had led each of them to think of their past lives, and of their prospects in the future. Then Stephen said, laughingly:

"The vacation season is almost over, and the new firm of Holton and Briggs will soon open their campaign against the sins of the nation."

"I have been thinking," said Stella, "that I don't care to use my own name in connection with this work. As the theatrical manager told me, the Stella is all right, but the Briggs is very commonplace."

"It makes no difference what name you are called by, if the work you do is well done."

"Well," hesitated Stella, "I am going to say something that I fear you will not like. You know I told you that I had been connected with the theatrical profession. From my experience, I don't think there is any class that is subjected to more temptations than the members of that profession. For a great part of the day their time is their own, and after the theatre is over at night, they are hungry, and sit down to supper where liquor almost invariably forms part of the repast. I am well known to theatregoers, not by my own name, but by that of 'Miss Frou-Frou.' Now, if you were to announce that Miss Frou-Frou, formerly well known in the theatrical profession, was aiding you in your labours, I know it would attract thousands of those who have listened to me, and wherever you went, I know that they would come and hear you."

The Reverend Mr. Holton, as has been stated several times, was a practical young man, and, although he had an aversion to the theatrical name proposed by Stella, he saw that her reasons were good, and that the name would help him greatly in his work by bringing his words to the ears of many who would be attracted by the peculiar announcement. So the matter was arranged, and the newspapers soon contained the announcement that the Rev. Stephen Holton, who had been connected with the Bethany Mission Chapel, would appear on the

lecture platform in the cause of temperance, and that he would be aided in his work by the well-known theatrical artist, Miss Frou-Frou.

When they returned to the city, they both began earnestly to prepare for the work before them. Stephen's crusade against intemperance was not to be directed merely against the abusive use of intoxicating liquors. It took a much wider range. In his mind, overindulgence in food and dress, or, as he termed it, the gluttony of luxury, was equally to be condemned. Again, he felt called upon to preach against giving the passions unbridled license. They, too, should be kept under proper moral restraint. Again, he sought to bring to the minds of those who were wealthy the idea that selfishness and a proper love for humanity were incompatible, and that while supplying their own wants, they should have some regard for the needs of their fellow men who were less fortunately situated.

Using the four sermons delivered at the Riverside Avenue Church as a basis of the lectures, he cut out, condensed, and added to, until he was satisfied with them. Then he began making the business preparations for his tour. He had decided to make his first stand in Maine. The temperance feeling in that State was very strong, and he thought that from the prominent workers in the cause, he could obtain not only advice, but more substantial assistance to carry on his work.

As Stella had said, she loved to sing, and she practised diligently. The sweet melody of the songs delighted her, and the words breathed strong sentiments of a love for truth, sobriety in all things, and humanity. Her old life was over, her new begun.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CASE OF CAPTAIN LITHGOW.

As may be surmised, Charlie Lempster spent very little of his time at home. "On business," that excuse which has been worn threadbare by constant application, was the one upon which he depended for justifying his almost continual absence. He told his wife that he was a travelling salesman, and that his trips were so arranged that he was rarely able to be at home except on Sundays. The fact is that he never left the city at all. He was obliged to keep up appearances at home by presenting himself there as often as had been his custom. His too indulgent father and mother thought nothing of it if he was gone for a night or all day Sunday, and these Sundays were the days that he spent with his almost deserted wife.

He did not fail to give his wife money to pay the rent, and to supply herself with food. In fact, he made her an allowance for these purposes, and every Sunday placed the money in her hands. In this respect, he was a great deal better than many husbands who are not gamblers or drunkards.

Mrs. Lempster knew but few people in the city, and she did not invite them to visit her. Several times she had spoken to her husband about his family, and asked him when he was going to disclose the fact of their marriage to them, but she had been met with excuse after excuse, and finally ceased to refer to the subject. And now that Jethro had gone back to the farm, her only companion was old Captain Lithgow, who was a model lodger. He spent all of his evenings at home. He rarely rose before nine o'clock, and before leaving the house, always left the key of his room with Mrs. Lempster. As a rule, he reached the house about five o'clock in the afternoon. Whatever the old captain may have surmised about her husband, he was too much of a gentleman to refer to it in his conversations with her. He studiously avoided all reference to her husband or herself, their friends or families; instead, he told her his marvellous experiences, which had come to him as the captain of a whaler. It was his custom, nearly every evening, after Sareta had eaten her supper and returned to her little sitting-room, to make a call upon his landlady. There was a capacious armchair in which he liked particularly to sit, and which Sareta had named "the captain's chair." He always retired early, for he said that an old man, like an old cat or an old dog, required less food and more sleep than a young one.

The Case of Captain Lithgow 213

He often spoke of his fruitless search for his sister. One afternoon he said: "Mrs. Lempster, I have about given up looking for my sister. I have had no replies to my advertisements in the newspapers, and Mr. Hodges, the detective, told me to-day that he has been unable to find any trace of her. She probably got married, but it could not have taken place anywhere within ten miles of Boston, for we have searched the records, and we have been up to the State House, but could find nothing there. Now I have about made up my mind to destroy the will in which I left all my money to her or her children, and take it and buy an annuity. What I get from that will support me as long as I live, and when I die, there won't be anything to fight about, for the insurance company will hold on to what's left."

The next day he did not return home until six o'clock, an hour later than usual. Before entering his own room, he knocked at Mrs. Lempster's door.

"You are late, captain," said she. "Won't you come in and sit down?"

"I don't think I shall make you a call to-night, Mrs. Lempster," said the captain. "I'm not feeling very well. I have got a bad attack of neuralgia, and it seems to be working up around my heart."

"I am very sorry," sympathised Sareta. "I am afraid you walk too much, and tire yourself out."

"Well, I have walked a good deal to-day," was

the captain's reply, and he placed his hand near his heart, as he experienced a severe twinge of pain. "I'm kind of nervous to-night. I drew my money out of the bank, and was going to the insurance office to buy that annuity. I thought I would get my will from the lawyer's office where I left it, but I had to wait for him so long that when I reached the insurance office, it had closed up. I didn't know just what to do with the will and the money, but I went into a stationer's and bought a big envelope, and I put the money — there are fifty good one thousand dollar bills — and the will inside of it, and there it is," he said, as he took it from his pocket, and held it up before her. "I have told you this, Mrs. Lempster, so if anything happens to me, you will know that I had the money, and then you can turn it over to my lawyer. You will know who he is, for his name is on the envelope which has the will in it."

The old captain then went to his room. About half an hour later, he sought Mrs. Lempster, and told her that the pain was getting worse instead of better, and asked her if she didn't have something that would relieve it. While speaking, he was seized with a more acute spasm than he had yet experienced, and he was obliged to take hold of the door jambs to support himself.

"All I have is chloroform. I bought some when

The Case of Captain Lithgow 215

I had a toothache. I have heard that if you wet a piece of flannel with it, and put it on the place where the pain is, it will do it good."

She got the flannel and the chloroform for him, and he retired to his room. Less than five minutes had passed before Sareta was summoned to the door by another knock. On opening it, she found the captain there.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Lempster, for troubling you so much, but I thought I would tell you that I don't think I'll lock my door to-night. I may want help, and may not be able to get up and unlock it. If you hear me pound on the floor, come in, won't you? I won't pound unless I'm pretty sick."

Sareta promised to answer his call, if he needed her services, and the old captain went once more to his room.

It happened that Charles Lempster came home about nine o'clock that night. He was nervous and ill at ease, but his wife did not ask him the cause, knowing that he never confided in her. Sareta, however, had too confiding and transparent a nature to keep anything from him. In course of conversation, she mentioned the old captain's sickness, and how she had given him the bottle of chloroform.

Soon after, Charlie took up a book, and seemed deeply interested in it. Sareta retired, but Charlie kept on reading. The clock struck twelve. Sareta awoke with a start.

"Why, are you still up, Charlie?"

"Yes, this book is mighty interesting, but I don't think I can finish it to-night. What do you say, Sareta, don't you think it would be a good idea for me to step in, and see if the old sea-captain is all right for the night?"

"He said that he would pound on the floor if he felt worse. I don't think I would disturb him, Charlie."

"But I won't disturb him. However, if his door is locked, I can't get in."

"Why, didn't I tell you that he left his door open so I could get in if he pounded?"

"Oh, I forgot that," said Charlie. Then he took up his book, and resumed his reading. Sareta soon fell asleep again, and when she once more became cognisant of what was going on about her, it was morning.

Soon after breakfast, Charlie left the house, saying that he should not be back for a week, as he was going on quite a long trip for the firm for which he worked.

"I shall be gone over Sunday, this time, Sareta," he said, "so I will give you your money in advance," and he placed twice her usual allowance in her hands.

Nine o'clock, ten, eleven — and the old captain had not come with the key. What could be the matter? Sareta could restrain her impatience no

longer. She knocked at the captain's door. There was no response. She knocked again. Still no response. Then she opened the door and looked in. The old captain was in bed, but a glance at his face showed her that the end had come. Then she noticed a handkerchief lying partly on his face, and the strong odour of chloroform in the room. Yes, he must have taken an overdose of chloroform, and it had caused his death.

What should she do? He had no relatives, but some one should be notified at once. She did not wish to call in a policeman, but to whom else could she go for aid and advice? Then she recalled the fact that Captain Lithgow had employed a detective named Hodges to look for his sister. She would go to him.

When she reached the Isburn Private Detective Agency, she inquired for Mr. John Hodges. He was not in, but she left word for him to come at once to see Captain Lithgow, as he needed his services. She went home, and remained in her own apartment, afraid to enter that terrible room, and not knowing what to do next. What that poor woman suffered during that hour of waiting, only those who have been through a similar experience can know.

Finally Mr. Hodges came. She told him all she knew — how Captain Lithgow came home — told

her about the money — about the will — about the pain — how she had given him the bottle of chloroform — how he had promised to pound upon the floor if he felt worse — what she had told her husband — and what her husband had said to her. The detective told her not to worry, — he would take charge of the whole matter, — and the little woman recovered somewhat of her confidence.

Mr. Hodges entered the room where the dead man lay, and approaching the bed, looked at its occupant. There could be no doubt but that the man was dead. Resting partly on his face, as if it had fallen away from his nose and mouth, was the handkerchief Sareta had seen, while in his clenched fingers was the bottle which had held the chloroform. It was empty, and the cork lay on the sheet close to the body. There was nothing to indicate that any violence had been done.

“A clear case of accidental death,” thought Hodges. “Poor old fellow! to die that way and alone. As I’m probably the only friend he had around here, it is my duty to look after his affairs. The first thing is to place his will and his money in the hands of the probate judge.”

He examined the pockets of the clothes which lay on a chair near the bed, but found no such envelope as Sareta had described. He looked through the captain’s other clothes, but with no success.

The Case of Captain Lithgow 219

Then he searched the bureau drawers, the closet shelves, and even the bed, thinking that the old sailor might have put such a document beneath his pillows, but discovered nothing. Lastly, he ransacked every nook and corner of the room, but without bringing the envelope to light.

"H'm!" he muttered, "that envelope is gone, and Mrs. Lempster swore that it was in the captain's possession last night. That, and the rest of her story, make it pretty certain that her husband has taken it." Then another suspicion flashed across him. "Did he kill the old captain for this money, or did he find him dead when he came in to see him, perhaps to steal, perhaps really to help him in his illness? Well, he may not be a murderer, but he certainly is a thief. That poor little wife of his! Now, what's best to be done?"

He sat down in a chair, and thought for a few moments. When he arose, his mind was evidently made up.

"I will save him," he resolved, "for the sake of that honest, sweet-faced little woman, who trusts in him and believes in him. I will get hold of him at once and make him restore the money, and that will end the matter."

Then he returned to the room where Mrs. Lempster sat, saying as he took a seat beside her: "I shall call in the medical examiner at once, and after

he has made his report, I will see that the old captain is buried and a headstone put up. I know that Mr. Isburn will advance the necessary funds until the court decides what shall be done with the property. I shall put the will and the money in their hands at once."

"It is so kind of you, Mr. Hodges, to do all this," said Sareta. "I am sorry my husband is not here to help you, but he went away this morning, and will not return for a week."

"Pardon me," queried Hodges, "but what is your husband's business?"

"He is a travelling salesman for Smith Brothers & Parker, dealers in saddlery and harness," said Mrs. Lempster. "He is on the road most of the time. Did you ever meet him?"

"No, I never did, but I hope to have that pleasure some day. I have been here, as you know, several times to see the late Captain Lithgow, but Mr. Lempster has never been at home."

"They say this is a very fine picture of him," and she took a photograph from an easel which stood on the table, and passed it to the detective.

He gave it a scrutinising glance. His observing eye caught the photographer's name, "Roylance," in gold letters at the bottom of the card. As he laid it down, the picture was firmly fixed in his memory, and he felt sure he would know his man among ten thousand.

"I am sorry this has happened," he said, as he rose to go. "You will be more lonesome than ever now. Have you no place where you could visit for a week or so? You should not remain alone here; not that I think that anything will harm you. but I should think it would be pleasanter to be among friends. Does your husband's family live in the city?"

The majority of women would have found some way to avoid giving a direct answer to this inquiry, and others would have prevaricated, but Sareta was too honest to invent an untruth, so she said, simply: "I think they do, but I have never met them."

Mr. Hodges made no comment, but excused himself on the plea that it was his duty to inform the medical examiner at once. He kept his word, and the body of the unfortunate sea-captain was removed from the house that night by the undertaker.

"It is my opinion," Mr. Hodges had declared to the examiner, "that everything in this case points either to suicide, or to an accidental death from an overdose of chloroform, but, as I knew the old captain quite intimately, and there was no reason for his committing suicide, I should incline to the accidental theory."

The medical examiner was evidently impressed by the detective's judgment, for in his official report, Captain Christopher Lithgow's sudden death was

termed accidental, and attributed to the careless use of chloroform as an anæsthetic to relieve pain.

“And now,” said the detective to himself, “to find young Lempster, and recover the old captain’s money.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRAIL ENDS.

THE first step Hodges took, was to go to Smith Brothers & Parker, and ascertain where Charles Lempster was to travel on this latest trip. In due time he reached the office, and was soon in conversation with the head bookkeeper, whom he knew.

"Greyson," said he, "I am looking for a young man, who they tell me travels for some saddlery firm here in the city. There has been some property left him, and my chief has told me to hunt him up. So you will do me a great favour to let me know the names of your travelling men."

"We have three of them, — Billy Mead, he has been with us for the last twenty years; Tom Ashby, he has travelled for us at least ten years; and a new man we engaged about six months ago. Let me see, what is his name? It is a peculiar one."

The detective was all attention. A great deal hinged on that young man's name.

"Oh, it is George Colworthy," said Greyson, finally.

"Well, none of those names come within a mile of the one I am looking for. Much obliged, Greyson. My man must be working for some other firm in the same business."

As he left the store, he pondered over this new phase of the case. It was not so easy now to secure Lempster as he had supposed. Perhaps he had told his wife that he was going to leave the city in order to divert any possible pursuit, and was in hiding close at hand. This meant for Hodges a careful inquiry and search, both in the city and at all railway stations. He would take up this matter immediately.

But on his return to the detective agency, he received an order from Mr. Isburn to start for the western part of the State at once on an important case. So at four o'clock he was speeding away from the city, after having left a description of Lempster, with instructions as to the steps to take to find him, in the hands of one of his assistants.

For an hour the train rolled on without a stop. Then it began to slow up, to leave passengers at a junction, where they might take a train on a connecting line for points south.

Just in front of Hodges, a young man rose to leave the train. As he half turned his face, the detective recognised Charles Lempster. Hastily following him through the car, Hodges overtook

him just as he was about to jump to the ground from the car-step, and grasping him by the collar, whispered: "Charles Lempster, you are my prisoner."

The next instant Hodge's hand tingled with a stinging blow, and his hold was loosed. He saw Lempster stumble to the ground, falling between the rails of the other track, which was the one nearest to the station itself. Quickly the detective jumped to the ground, intending to grapple with and secure his prisoner before he could rise. He had one foot upon the rail, and was prepared to spring forward, when he heard a loud whistle. Not ten feet away was a locomotive rapidly advancing toward him. He lifted his foot from the rail and stepped back quickly. He had misjudged the distance, for his head came violently in contact with the side of the car which he had just left. Almost stunned by the blow, and knowing that he must fall, he had presence of mind enough to turn about so far, that when he dropped to the ground, it was between the tracks. Then he lost consciousness. When he came to, he saw that both trains had disappeared. He was on the point of rising, when he was grasped roughly by the shoulder.

"What's the matter with yer? Drunk?" were the words that fell upon his ears. He stood up, and faced his interlocutor.

"No," he replied, "I never get drunk, and if I do, what business is it of yours?"

"Well," said the other man, "I'm the station agent, and if I find anybody laying down between the tracks, I generally find that they are drunk, but if you ain't drunk, what are you here for? What's the matter with you?"

"I jumped backwards to escape the train, and struck my head against the car which stood here. It knocked me out for a few minutes, I suppose, but I am afraid my companion did not escape so easily."

He looked up and down the track, expecting to see the mangled remains of Charlie Lempster, but there was no indication that such a tragedy had occurred.

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Hodges, to the station agent, "for speaking to you as I did, but I am still a little dazed and somewhat weak in the knees."

"Oh, that's all right. I'm sorry you got hurt. Just lean on me, and I'll help you over the track, and then you can sit down on the platform and rest until you feel better."

Hodges soon collected his scattered senses, and his mind at once reverted to Charlie Lempster. What had become of him? He looked across the street. A fat, pleasant-faced man was standing in

the doorway of a liquor saloon. Mr. Hodges walked slowly across the street, and accosted him.

"Have you seen anything of a young fellow dressed in a black suit?" and he went on to describe Charlie Lempster as minutely as possible.

"Well, I think I did," said the man, "and he had the closest shave from being made into mince-meat that I ever saw. I was standing at the door here, and I saw him stumble and fall between the tracks. Then I saw you put your foot on the rail. I suppose you were going to help him to get up. Then the freight train came along. It shut you out of sight. I supposed the other fellow was under the wheels, but no. I don't see how he did it. He didn't try to get up on his feet, but he must have given his body a lurch, and thrown himself over the rail, for he got up, picked up his hat, stopped to brush his clothes, and then ran along by the side of the track. Then the train came to a stop, for there's a switch up there that they have to change. When the train came to a standstill, there was a flat car that stopped right in front of the young feller, and he jumped up on it. Then I made up my mind that he was going to steal a ride. A customer came in just then for a glass of beer. As soon as he had gone, I came back to the door, for I felt kind of curious about the young feller, and wanted to see what he was going to do. The train was there,

but there was no sign of the man. There was one of those big boilers on the flat car, and I made up my mind that he had probably crept inside of that, so the brakeman wouldn't see him."

"I think I will have a glass of whiskey," said Hodges. "My nerves are a little shaken up, and I have a bad bump on my head."

"You had better bathe it with some alcohol," said the man, as he turned some into a tumbler and passed it to the detective. Mr. Hodges applied the whiskey internally, and the alcohol externally, thanked the man for his kindness, threw a quarter on the counter, and reached the station just in time to catch a train which would take him to his destination.

When he returned to the city, he gave an account of his experiences to Mr. Isburn.

"Well," said the latter, "we can't expect things to go our way all the time. Make out your report as usual, and put it on file. We will land that fellow yet. Write out an accurate description of his personal appearance, and have it put in type at once. Can you get a picture of him?"

Mr. Hodges recalled the name that he had seen on the bottom of the photograph which Mrs. Lempster had shown him. "There will be no difficulty about that," he replied.

"Then have a half-tone made from it at once,"

said Mr. Isburn, "and send your circular, when completed, to our agents in all parts of the country and Europe. He may endeavour to reach the other side. I would advise you to cable to Liverpool, London, Havre, Amsterdam, and Genoa."

But Mr. Hodges was destined to meet with another discomfiture. He called upon Mr. Roylance, the photographer, and preferred a request which he had often made to others in the same line of business, and which had usually been complied with. Mr. Roylance found the name and the number of the negative, but returned with the information that the plates could not be found.

"Why, how is that?" asked Mr. Hodges. "I thought you always kept them."

Then a young lady clerk came to her employer's assistance. "Why, don't you remember, Mr. Roylance," she said, "Mr. Lempster only had one picture printed from the negative, although he paid for a full dozen. Then he insisted upon buying the negative, and, though contrary to our custom, it was sold to him. Just as he started to leave the rooms, he dropped it, and it was broken in pieces. I remember that he laughed and said that it was all right, and that it didn't matter anyway."

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTERWARD.

A FEW hours after Mr. Hodges had left Sareta, she received a note from her husband, saying that his trip was to take him to the middle West, and that if it proved successful, he was to be promoted to a responsible position in the firm's branch office in Chicago. "So," he concluded, "don't be surprised some day to see me come back to bring you out to a new home in the Lake City." He enclosed a hundred dollars for her further expenses in case of his protracted absence.

That same afternoon a similar letter was received by Mr. Lempster, who showed it to his wife with delight. This letter, however, concluded, "I will run back home to bid you good-bye, in case things turn out well, and then it'll be the West for a good long time."

One week, two weeks, three weeks passed, and no sign came from Charles. The anxious father, upon inquiry at the office where Charles had his desk, learned from the "bucket-shop" operator (the

ostensible note-broking partner of his son) that the young man had left for the West all right, as he had seen him off on the train. Then, after a fortnight more of fruitless search by a detective agency (not Isburn's), the parents concluded that their son must have met with some accident or foul play that was beyond the possibility of trace. Mourning his death, they still hoped against hope.

And Sareta? Her heart leaped at her husband's letter. For a fortnight she lived in the hope of hearing from him again. At the end of a month this hope had changed to anxious suspense. Then a dull apathy succeeded, followed by a forced resignation—a state in which she looked forward to nothing and expected nothing, but a problem confronted her which had to be met. Her available funds grew less day by day, and the conviction was forced upon her that she must either return home or find some employment, for her pride forbade her seeking out her husband's people. She decided that she could not go home. She felt that she would be kindly welcomed by her parents, but she feared her grandfather's Scriptural quotations, and her grandmother's reminiscences. Then she knew that Mrs. Willcutt would either learn the true facts of the case or invent something worse, and acquaint the whole town with them. That knowledge would prevent her from going to church or visiting the neigh-

bours, and she did not like the idea of being imprisoned, as it were, within the walls of her father's house, pleasant as such a life might be in many ways.

In her dilemma, she thought of Stephen Holton. She paid a visit to the chapel, but found that it was in the hands of the Salvation Army, and that Mr. Holton had gone away to lecture on temperance. She returned home downhearted, for she could think of no one else to whom she could turn for advice. Yes, there was one other. Why had she not thought of him before? Mr. Lethbridge. He had been Charlie's friend — he had been in love with her — he had told her so in his letter — when it was too late.

To Chester's office she went, and told him her story. The young lawyer was surprised when he learned of Charlie's disappearance. He had not seen him for a long time, but that was not so strange, after all, for his law business required his attention all day and during many evenings, and Charlie's haunts were not visited by him.

"Mrs. Lempster," said Chester, "I sympathise with you in your unfortunate situation. I agree with you that it would not be pleasant for you to return to North Gayville. If you secure employment, it will be impossible for you to keep house, as you have been doing. I would suggest that you dispose of your household furniture with the excep-

tion of enough to furnish one room. Now, my business is increasing very rapidly, and I find that I shall be obliged to engage another copyist in order to have my briefs and other legal documents ready in time for court. If you are willing to accept such a situation, it is open to you. I will pay you by the page or by the week as you prefer. By the latter plan, you will have a fixed sum to depend upon; by the former, if business is good, as I hope it will be for both our sakes, you can make much more money. You write a good, plain hand, I presume. I forget, but I do not think I have ever seen your writing."

Sareta flushed hotly, for she recalled the fact that she had never answered the letter in which Chester had asked her to become his wife.

"If you have no objection," said Chester, "copy something for me. There are paper and pens on the table."

"What shall I write?" asked Sareta.

"Oh, it makes no difference," and Chester took up a newspaper. "Copy this paragraph from this paper. Here is an item from Arizona. It probably gives an account of the discovery of some more gold."

Sareta took the paper, and seating herself at the little table, went diligently to work. Chester was evidently busily employed with some legal papers, but the fact was he could think of nothing but his

visitor. The knowledge that the girl he had once loved — and whom he loved still — was in the room with him gave him a peculiar and unaccustomed feeling of delight.

In a short time Sareta came to his desk, and laid the sheet of paper down before him. The neat legible writing suited him exactly.

“That is very well done,” he exclaimed, “but what is it all about? No doubt, some new gold mine discovery.”

“No,” said Sareta, “it is an account of a horrible murder.” She sank into a chair beside his desk, and watched his face as he read what she had copied.

“News of a horrible murder connected with robbery comes from a Santa Cruz mining district in Arizona. It seems that two miners, named Jack Fisher and Bill Dike, who had been working in the Santa Cruz mines, decided to go prospecting, and left the mines about four months ago. One or the other was in the habit of going to the mines once a fortnight to buy supplies. As they had not shown up for nearly six weeks, two of Bill Dike’s former friends decided to go in search of them, fearing that they had been killed by wild beasts, or fallen the victims to some accident. To their horror, they discovered on arriving at the shanty which the two men had erected, that a foul murder and robbery had been committed. The body of Bill Dike was

found on the floor in an advanced state of decomposition. He had been killed by a stab in the back, the knife having gone entirely through his body, cutting his heart in twain. His partner, Jack Fisher, was undoubtedly the murderer. In addition to this crime, he had robbed Bill Dike of all his money, for the latter's belt, which had been rifled, was found upon the floor of the shanty. No trace has been found of Fisher, who has had plenty of time to reach a place of safety."

"That is terrible, is it not?" said Chester, as he laid the paper down.

"Yes," Sareta replied, "what a heartless wretch that murderer must have been! Supposing that Charlie had been Jack Fisher's partner, and had met such a fate!" and Sareta with great difficulty refrained from bursting into tears.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A TERRIBLE EVENT.

OLD Jethro and his son had returned home. The old gentleman made his father and his wife's mother promise not to be too hard on young Jethro, for he had deemed it both just and proper that the other members of the family conclave should be informed that his son, while in the city, had not only drank liquor, but had gambled, and had behaved in other ways in a manner unworthy a member of the Judkins family. Although 'Ram could not refrain from throwing Scriptural selections at Jethro whenever he was within hearing, and while Grandma Crane continually referred to the fact that 'Bijah never drunk a drop of liquor in his life, Jethro got along quite well at home.

He took hold with a will to help his father pay off the mortgage as soon as possible. The fact that that mortgage was on the old farm, and that it was known to everybody in North Gayville, did more to make a sober man of Jethro than anything else could have done. He kept out of range of Mrs.

Willcutt's biting tongue, but continued his friendly relations with Josh.

One day he said to his father: "Have I done pretty well, lately, dad?"

"Yes, you've flaxed around like a house afire. What do you want? Some money?"

"No," said Jethro, "I don't want any money, but I would like to go hunting to-morrow. I feel as though I would like to get out in the woods and breathe some fresh air. Perhaps I can get a few birds for dinner day after to-morrow."

"Well, go along, Jethro. I used to be quite a good shot when I was a young feller, but I don't think I'll ever handle a gun again, unless those fellers up North should come over the border." By those fellows up North he meant the Canadians.

Jethro finally decided that he would like to have a companion on his trip. He hunted up Josh, and asked him to go with him.

"But remember, Josh," he said, "you must not drink another drop. If you stop now, you'll sober off and be of some use by to-morrow, but if you drink another drop, you can't go with me."

"Oh, that'll be all right," replied Josh. "I hain't got no money, and old Briggs won't chalk up any more on the slate. Fact is, I'll have to earn some money, or else go dry, and that would be awful."

"Well, if you will come up to my house sober

to-morrow morning, and go with me on my trip, when we get home, I'll give you a half dollar."

The next morning, about eight o'clock, Jethro was out at the barn making preparations for his trip. His loaded rifle was leaning against the side of the barn. He went down to the house to get the food that his mother had put up for his lunch. When he returned, he found Josh handling the rifle. A look at Josh showed him that he had not kept his promise. Instead of being sober, he was in his usual state of about three-quarters full.

"Our bargain is off," said Jethro. "You promised to keep sober, and you're not."

"Oh, that'll be all right," said Josh. "The tramp will drive it out o' me, and, by the time we get to the mountains, I'll be as straight as a deacon."

Jethro thought it over. Perhaps, after all, if he left Josh at home, he would be worse off than if he took him with him.

"Well, I'll try you, Josh, but, if you are not all right by the time we get to the hills, I shall call the trade off, and you won't get your money, and you'll have to come back alone. Be careful and don't touch that rifle. It's loaded. I am going out in the orchard to get some apples, for there's no water up to the hills, and, when I can't get a drink, I like to eat an apple."

"So do I," said Josh, "but I like the apple juice better."

Jethro was soon lost to sight behind the trees in the orchard. Josh took up the rifle and looked along the barrel.

"Talk about my being tipsy. I could hit anything within forty rods. I've hearn tell that a tipsy man could make the best shots."

At that moment, a kitten sprang from the kitchen doorway, and ran across the space between the house and the chicken-coop. Then it stopped and slowly retraced its steps.

"By cracky! I believe I could hit that cat."

He was just drunk enough not to realise what an act of inhumanity that would be. He levelled his rifle, took aim, and then, drunken like, closed his eyes preliminary to shooting. As he opened them again, he fired the gun.

A piercing scream filled the air. Josh looked in the direction from which the sound came. No cat was in sight, but, instead, the form of a little girl was upon the ground. The rifle fell from his hands, and he dropped upon his knees, trembling with fear.

Just at that moment, Jethro returned from the orchard with his arms full of apples. He noticed the smoke curling from the mouth of the rifle, and the position which Josh Willcutt had assumed. He

looked farther on. What was that? His sister? Yes, the pink ribbons told the story. A few rapid strides and he was at her side. He lifted the stricken form in his arms. Yes, it was his little sister, Polly. Her dress was drenched with blood. That blundering, drunken fool had shot her!

With Polly in his arms, Jethro dashed into the house. His father, who was washing his hands at the sink, dropped the towel and ran after him. Through the sitting-room Jethro bore his bleeding burden. "I'll put her on your bed, mother," he cried, as he left the room. The affrighted family followed him swiftly up the stairs.

"Try to stop the blood, mother," he shouted, as he dashed out of the room. His parting words, "I am going for the doctor," came to them from the foot of the stairs.

When Jethro reached the farmyard, he glanced about, but Josh was not in sight. The horse was soon harnessed, and Jethro drove off at full speed toward Gayville, in quest of Doctor Patten.

If Jethro had looked behind the chicken-coop, he would have found the "blundering, drunken fool" who had done the shooting. The report from the rifle and the scream had together acted upon Josh's muddled brain, and he was fully aware of the awful deed that he had committed. Had he killed her, or was she only wounded? Would she die or

recover? He grovelled in the earth in the abject fear of harrowing suspense.

It seemed an age to those who stood beside the bed upon which little Polly lay, before Jethro and the doctor arrived. Doctor Patten made a careful and thorough examination of the wound.

"She is very weak," he said, turning to Mrs. Judkins. "In her present condition, I should not dare to probe for the ball. Have you any brandy?"

"No," replied Mrs. Judkins, "there ain't a drop of speerits in the house."

"I usually have some with me," said Doctor Patten, as he looked in his satchel, "but I used the last at the case I just left, and Jethro was in such a hurry that I did not stop to refill the bottle."

Jethro volunteered to run over to Briggs's and get some.

"I think," declared 'Ram Judkins, in solemn tones, "that we have seen enough of the bad effects of ardent speerits for one day."

"As you will," said the doctor, quietly. "I have some spirits of ammonia, I find; if you will give me a tumbler and some water, it may revive her."

The doctor's expectation was verified. Polly opened her eyes, and recognised those who stood at her bedside. Then Doctor Patten spoke a few words in an undertone to Mr. Judkins.

"It is only a question of time," he declared.

"The bullet undoubtedly pierced the lungs, and she will die from internal hemorrhage."

"Where's kitty?" asked Polly, in a faint voice.

Jethro dashed out of the room, and, in a short time, returned with the innocent cause of the calamity, little Rosie. The kitten was placed upon the bed. Polly put her arm caressingly about it, and it nestled down and composed itself for a nap.

Jethro had stationed himself by the chamber door like a sentinel. He knew that Death would soon be a visitor. How he wished in his heart that he could bar the entrance to this dreaded approach. But it was not Death who opened the door and entered, but his chosen emissary.

With his clothes torn and dishevelled and smeared with the damp soil, his hair disordered, his face red and bloated, Josh Willcutt tottered into the room. Impelled by some influence that he could not understand, and which he could not resist, he had felt himself drawn to the bedside of his victim. He fell upon his knees beside it, and buried his face in his hands, which rested upon the pretty coverlid, the many-coloured squares of which Polly and her sister had made.

Polly had seen Josh as he entered the room. She looked at his bowed head, and finally spoke.

"You didn't mean to shoot me, Mr. Josh, did you?" she asked, using the name by which, as a child, she had always called him. |

"No, Polly," but his voice sounded like a groan.

"It wasn't you, Mr. Josh; it was the drink, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Polly."

"You won't drink any more, will you, Mr. Josh?"

There was a moment's pause, and then the man said, distinctly: "No, Polly."

"You will promise that for my sake, won't you?"

There was another pause, but the man said at last: "Yes, Polly."

"Then I'll forgive you for shooting me, Mr. Josh, because I know you didn't mean to," and the dying girl stretched out her hand toward the poor wretch. He raised his head, and looked at the thin, taper, almost bloodless fingers which had stolen toward him. He could not take that little hand in his. He extended the forefinger of his begrimed hand, and Polly's hand closed about it. For a moment, she lay with her eyes closed.

"But I can't forgive you, Mr. Josh, for trying to shoot kitty. I love her very much," and as she said this, she tenderly caressed the little ball of black fur that was resting beside her.

"Don't you think that was very wicked, Mr. Josh?"

"Yes, Polly," groaned the man, for he was not

able to speak any other words to convey his thoughts.

“And you will promise me that you won’t shoot at them any more?”

“Yes, Polly,” was all that Josh could say.

“Then I’ll forgive you for that too,” said Polly, and she closed her fingers a little more firmly on the big finger that they encircled.

Her twin sister, Dolly, sat at the head of the bed, her face buried in the pillow upon which Polly’s head rested. Dolly was heart-broken, and the pillow was wet with her tears. Grandma Crane stood beside her, and, for once in her life, it never occurred to her what ’Bijah would have said at a similar occurrence. ’Ram Judkins stood at the foot of the bed, his face as stern and rigid as though he had been the chosen avenger of the crime. Doctor Patten was at the head of the bed beside Dolly, occasionally addressing a few words in a whisper to Mr. and Mrs. Judkins, who were near him. Young Jethro had again assumed his post as sentinel at the door. Polly opened her eyes once more, and uttered the simple words, “Good-bye.” But they meant so much to those who stood about her that none could repeat them in return. Then a slight shudder ran through her, and, for an instant, there was a convulsive heaving of the chest; then she lay motionless. A deadly hush seemed to fall upon the room.

Doctor Patten leaned forward and placed his hand upon her heart. Then he removed his spectacles, wiped them, and held them to her mouth. As he withdrew them and looked at them, all could tell by the expression upon his face that the end had come, and little Polly Judkins had become another victim to be charged to that long account against intemperance.

Jethro advanced with a firm step, and placing his hand upon the man's shoulder, said: "Come, Josh." But, before he could obey the command, Doctor Patten was obliged to unloose Polly's fingers which had closed tightly upon Josh's.

As they stood at the kitchen door, which opened into the farmyard, Josh asked, in a husky voice: "Do you think they'll hang me?"

"They ought to, but I'm afraid they won't," said Jethro, sternly. "They don't hang idiots."

The poor wretch looked out upon the world. The skies were blue overhead; the sun was shining, and its bright rays made the surface of the lake look like a combination of blue and silver; the grass looked as green as ever; the hens were walking about, followed by their little chicks; Rogue, the house-dog, had found a shady place, and was sound asleep; everything seemed peaceful, quiet, and content, but in Josh Willcutt's heart there was a blank, an aching void, as he shambled away toward his home.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONSEQUENCES.

LITTLE Polly's death was town talk for several weeks, but, as may be surmised, it was not Mrs. Willcutt who did the gossiping. She had firmly determined that old Briggs (whom she deemed the cause of her husband's act) should leave their house, where he had boarded. She would not even allow him to take his meals with her, and he was obliged to cook his own food.

No legal proceeding had been instituted against Josh Willcutt; for, although the calamity was greatly deplored by all, it was looked upon, on all sides, as an accident.

About a month after the tragedy, Jethro happened to meet Josh upon the road. He did not upbraid him. To his surprise, he found that Willcutt showed no signs of drink, and his clothing was neater and cleaner than any he had before worn.

"Jethro," said Josh, "I don't ask you to forgive me. I don't think it's right you should. I can never forgive myself, but I'm doing the only thing I

can do, and you can bet it's mighty hard to do it, to show my repentance for my sin. Perhaps you won't believe it, Jethro, but I've reformed."

"There was need enough of it," said Jethro, somewhat sarcastically.

"I don't blame you, Jethro, for speakin' harsh to me. I know, if I was in your place, I couldn't find words enough to say to yer, but let me tell yer, Jeth, I'll never drink another drop. I've had a month of hell strugglin' with it, an' more'n once I've almost sneaked down to Briggs's for a drop; but I've been rastlin' with it hard, an' now I hope I can overcome it, with the help of the Lord."

The morning of the accident, Ichabod had been out fishing. From the moment when he learned of his sister's death, a change seemed to come over him. Formerly mischievous and full of boyish pranks, he now became studious and thoughtful.

From Sareta came a sweet and tender letter, which helped greatly to allay her mother's grief; while in consoling the sorrows of another, Sareta felt her own diminish.

One pleasant evening, Mrs. Judkins and 'Ram were alone in the sitting-room. He was reading the Scriptures, while Mrs. Judkins was sewing on an article of clothing intended for Dolly. The young girl entered the room, and, after placing a book upon the table, passed into the kitchen. Mrs. Jud-

kins looked up, with a tear glistening in each eye, and said:

“Do you know, 'Ram, I am getting kinder reconciled to Polly's death. To see Dolly come into the room just as she did now, and later on to go out in the kitchen, and see her again, makes it kinder seem as though both on 'em are here, just the same as ever.”

The old gentleman pushed back his spectacles, and attentively regarded his daughter-in-law, who was wiping a tear from her eye with the corner of her apron.

“I'm glad to hear you say that, Betsy. The Lord's ways are not always our ways, but it is our duty to bow humbly to his will.” Then he added: “‘The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.’”

One day, a few months later, young Jethro drove over to Gayville on business, and found that bills had been posted in different parts of the town, announcing that a great temperance revival meeting would be held in about two weeks in the Town Hall in Gayville. Handbills in great numbers were to be found at the stores and the hotel, and Jethro was requested by the advance agent to take some of them to North Gayville when he went home, and distribute them where he thought they would do the most good.

When the time came Jethro decided that he would go to the meeting, and he invited Josh Willcutt to accompany him. Though in his heart he had never forgiven Josh for causing the death of his little sister, he felt that it was his duty to do all that he could to keep him in the right path now that he had reformed. Jethro now looked upon his own life in Boston as though it had been a dream. He had no innate love for liquor, but he had been carried forward by the force of circumstances, despite his own better judgment.

Quite a number of the inhabitants of North Gayville also went to the great temperance meeting. Jethro felt as though there was an opening in the floor, ten feet wide, into which he must fall, when he looked up to the platform, and found that the Miss Frou-Frou who was singing temperance songs was no other than Stella Briggs, the girl whom he had loved so long.

He told Josh to drive home alone that night, for he proposed to stay at Gayville until the next day. "You can come over for me to-morrow, early in the morning. Tell father that Stella Briggs is here, and that I am bound to see her, and have a talk with her."

Josh started for home about eleven o'clock. What a strange world this was, after all. Here he was a reformed man, who had just been to a temperance

meeting where the daughter of the man who had sold all the liquor, and had made all the drunkards in North Gayville, was up on the platform, singing temperance songs.

As he neared home, a bright light met his eyes. What could it be? Something was on fire. He whipped up his horse, and rapidly approached what he soon discovered was a burning building. Could it be his own house? It was not very far from it, anyway.

After old Briggs had been obliged to leave his boarding-house by the irate Mrs. Willcutt, he had fitted up a room in the loft of the grocery store, and slept there. The death of Polly Judkins had had a marked effect upon the residents of North Gayville. Not only did it work the complete reform of Josh Willcutt, but the effect had been widespread, and, although many who had been hard drinkers had not given the habit entirely up, still they avoided Briggs's grocery store, or, rather, the rum store in the shed behind it.

Trade, too, at the grocery began to fall off rapidly, and finally grew so small that Mr. Briggs began to bewail his unfortunate condition. Although he had been too miserly to drink much when that drink meant money in his till, when he found that he could not sell his gin and whiskey, he fell into the habit of drinking it himself.

One night, on making up his cash, he found that the receipts for the entire day had been but little more than a dollar. This was the worst day that he had ever had, and he felt that it would not do to remain any longer in business under such circumstances. He was getting tired out anyway. The people did not like him, and he did not care for the people.

He paid a visit to the whiskey barrel and took a deep draught of the fiery fluid. The fumes rose to his brain, and under their influence he concocted a scheme which would free him from his present business, and yet put money into his pocket. His store and its contents were insured for more than their real value, but if it caught fire and everything was burned up, he would get the insurance money.

He proceeded craftily to work. The fire must gain a good headway while he was asleep. He must be awakened by the smoke, and creep out on the roof of the store. There was a tree standing close by the window, the branches of which he could reach when driven from the building by the smoke. He could save himself in that way, and it would remove all suspicion.

Before going to bed on the night of the great revival meeting at Gayville, he dropped a lighted match among some loose paper under a counter. Making sure that the fire was under way, he quickly

ascended to his little room, and was apparently soon sound asleep.

He waited in suspense. The effect of the liquor had largely passed away, and every nerve was on the alert. Had the fire gone out? It must have. He could not smell any smoke. He did not dare to get up and look, for some one might be attracted by the flames, and might be close to the store and see him. No, if the scheme failed this time, he would try it again; but this was such a good opportunity, when so many people were gone over to Gayville, and it would be hard to get folks enough together to put out the fire. No, it must be burning. A faint smell of smoke came into his room.

He had placed his vest, containing his watch, and a pocketbook with his money in it, near by. He would put that on when he escaped; that would only be natural. Yes, it was burning. Thick clouds of black smoke soon filled the room. He inhaled it, and began to cough. Now was the time to escape. He put on his vest, climbed out on the roof, and called: "Fire! Fire!" at the top of his voice, and his cries were heard by Josh Willcutt, as he approached the building.

Briggs was making ready to make the jump which would enable him to reach a bough of the tree and thus save himself, when there was a loud explosion. It seem to Josh as though the entire

grocery store was thrown bodily into the air, and then came down in a heap upon the ground. Then the fire started up afresh, and every part of the building was soon wrapped in flames. Josh rushed forward, and tried to peer through the smoke to ascertain the whereabouts of Mr. Briggs, but he could see nothing of him. Next, he looked up in the tree to see if he had been able to jump from the roof. No, he was not there.

The light from the fire, followed by the explosion, had attracted the attention of the inmates of some of the adjacent farmhouses. There was no water near at hand except in the well of Mr. Briggs's house, some three hundred feet distant, so the farmers looked on, unable to check the progress of the flames, which were consuming the building, or to find any traces of the whereabouts of its owner.

"The shed will go next," cried a man. "The fire is working that way."

"If we don't get that liquor out, it will all burn up, too," said another.

"Let it burn," said Josh Willcutt. "I don't believe there's a man among you who'd raise a hand to save that liquor. I think it has caused enough suffering in this town, and I say if we can't save old Briggs's life, let his whiskey and gin go with him."

The crowd had been much augmented, for many

of those who had attended the meeting at Gayville had been attracted by the fire, and had driven to the scene. Josh's words and manner seemed to convince the people, the majority of whom were not drinking men. Soon, explosion after explosion followed, and Briggs's stock of liquor quickly became the prey of the flames.

The next morning, the charred bones of Mr. Briggs were found beneath the ruins of the grocery store. It was Josh Willcutt who finally gave an explanation as to the cause of the first explosion.

"I tell you what it was," said Josh. "Don't you remember that in a little closet, right under the room where he slept, he kept a keg of powder? You know he was licensed to keep and sell gunpowder, and he had it locked up in that little closet. Now, that first explosion was when the keg of powder went off and tore the store all to pieces. Briggs must have fallen back into the middle of it, and the rest of the building fell in on him. That's why we couldn't find him."

As soon as Josh Willcutt had arrived at this conclusion as to the cause of Briggs's death, it dawned upon him that his daughter was in the next town. Perhaps she intended to leave Gayville on the first train in the morning, and then, perhaps, she would stay over until the noon train, so as to have that talk with Jethro, but it was his duty to find out.

At any rate, he had to go over for Jethro as he had promised. So he drove over at a rapid pace to Gayville.

He found Jethro standing on the platform of the railway station.

"Have you seen Stella yet?" asked Josh.

"Haven't had a chance yet. I've been up to the hotel twice. The first time, she hadn't got up, and the second time, the clerk told me they were eating their breakfast. I am going up again in a few minutes."

"Well, I have got something for you to tell her," and Josh proceeded to give an account of the fire, and of the terrible fate which had befallen Stella's father.

"Well, you stay here, Josh, till I come back."

Jethro had intended to seek an interview with Stella, and find out the state of her feelings toward him. He had never cared so much for any other girl as he had for her, and he naturally thought he was in love with her. But now he could not speak of his love, when he had such terrible news to give her.

While at breakfast that morning, Stephen had asked Stella whether she wished to go to North Gayville, and see her father.

"I shall not go unless he sends for me," she had replied, "and that isn't likely. When he put me

out of his house, he told me never to darken its doors again, and I never shall, unless he is sick, and has no one to care for him."

Stephen and Stella were sitting in the little parlour of the hotel when Jethro entered. He had told the clerk in a few words what had taken place, and asked him to keep folks out of the parlour until he had finished his story.

Stella bore the blow stoically. She did not even cry when Jethro dwelt upon the details of her father's tragic death. Stephen felt sad at heart when he saw that her nature had become so hardened, but then he thought when she was alone, the full force of her loss would come home to her, and that pity, if not love, would cause her tears to flow.

Josh Willcutt drove the party to North Gayville, and, at Jethro's invitation, Mr. Holton and Stella became the guests of the Judkins family.

At Stella's request, Mr. Holton conducted the funeral services over the remains of her father. His sermon touched the hearts and brought tears to the eyes of all who heard it, and Stephen, to his great relief, saw that Stella was not an exception.

Then the late Mr. Briggs's personal affairs were looked into. No suspicion existed as to the real cause of the fire, which had been thought accidental, and the amount of the insurance would, no doubt, be paid by the company in due time. Besides this,

it was found that there was a large sum of money deposited in the bank at Gayville, and some stocks and bonds, the whole amounting, including the insurance, to about thirty thousand dollars. No will could be found. The cashier of the bank told Stella that several days before the fire, her father had come to the bank, had opened his private box, and had taken out some papers, but the cashier did not know what they were.

Stella was her father's heir, and entitled to all the property, but it would take some time to have an administrator appointed by the Probate Court, and have matters arranged with him, so that her property might be available for her use. Stella and Mr. Holton were invited to remain with the Judkinses while she was attending to her business affairs.

On several occasions she drove over to Gayville with Jethro for her companion. He made an opportunity to speak of his love for her, but she would give him no decided answer. Neither would she consent to an engagement.

"I don't know my own mind, Jethro," she said, "any better than I did when I left home. I like you and have always liked you, but I don't feel that I love you as a wife should love her husband. We will leave it this way. I have entered into an agreement with Mr. Holton to travel with him as his

assistant for a year. By the time the year is up, and it may be before, I will write you, and give you my answer."

Jethro importuned her to break her contract with Mr. Holton, and settle down in North Gayville, but she was firm in her determination to keep her agreement with Mr. Holton, and Jethro was forced to desist from his appeals.

One evening, Stella asked Jethro and Josh Willcutt to meet Mr. Holton and herself in the Judkins's parlour, for she had an important question to ask them. When they were seated, she said:

"How much of the money that my father left was made honestly by the sale of groceries, and how much by the sale of liquor?"

Jethro and Josh agreed that it was about half and half, and Mr. Holton expressed the opinion that their estimate was probably correct.

"Well," said Stella, and a look of determination showed itself in her face, "I have decided how I am going to dispose of my money. The half that has been made from the sale of groceries I shall keep for myself. The other half I shall give to you, Mr Holton, so that you can use it in your work. I can conceive of no better way of disposing of the profits of liquor selling than by using them to reclaim those who have become the victims of intemperance."

CHAPTER XXVI.

“THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL.”

LIKE many other owners of real estate, Mr. David Emerson was often involved in litigation, his real or fancied property rights being the question at issue. A certain case had been decided against him, but he promptly appealed, so as to carry the matter to a higher court.

He had made it a rule never to employ for the second time a lawyer who had lost a case which he had entrusted to him. The matter was soon to come up in the higher court, and it was necessary for him to secure an attorney at once.

“Why don’t you go to Chester Lethbridge? He is a young man, but has been very successful,” some one asked him.

That word “successful” was what led Mr. Emerson to visit the office of Chester Lethbridge. Chester went over the case with him, and when he fully understood the situation, said:

“Mr. Emerson, I think the chances are about even on this case, but my opinion is not infallible. A title

insurance company might take a different view of the case from what I do. You might get their opinion as well as mine."

The next day Mr. Emerson came back with a look of pleased satisfaction on his face.

"That was a mighty good idea of yours, Mr. Lethbridge — telling me to go to a title insurance company. What do you suppose they agreed to do? They said if I would pay them one thousand dollars, they would insure my title for ten thousand. Now, I have been figuring out the matter, and it stands this way. If I win, I am out twelve hundred and fifty dollars — one thousand to the company, and a quarter as much to you; if I lose, I get nine thousand dollars less two hundred and fifty to you, and about seven hundred and fifty which the court will mulct me. That will leave me eight thousand ahead, so under the circumstances, Mr. Lethbridge, I don't think I would work very hard to win the case."

"I shall do my best to win it, though," declared Chester, as his visitor closed the door of his office.

Although Chester did do his best, Mr. Emerson lost his suit, but he told the young lawyer that he never paid out any money with more satisfaction.

As a result of this, not only did Mr. Emerson continue to place his business in Chester's hands, but his endorsement led many others to do the same,

and, from a professional, and to a certain extent pecuniary point of view, Chester Lethbridge was on the high road to success.

One morning Mr. Emerson called at Chester's office.

“I've brought my will, Mr. Lethbridge,” he said. “I'm going to make a new one. I made this one out a good many years ago, when I didn't have so much money as I have now. It was just after my wife died, and I left all I had to my daughter Eleanor. I have no other near relatives, excepting a sister, whom I have not seen for a good many years. I used to give her money, and I don't mean to leave her any. I am going to give all my money to Eleanor, but I don't want to leave it so that she can spend it for anything and everything that she sets her eyes on. I want to tie it up in some way, so that she can't spend anything but the interest. That will be enough for her. Have you any idea how much I'm worth, Mr. Lethbridge?”

“Not the slightest.”

“Well, a good many who would like to know have looked through the tax-books, but they couldn't find it all there. Well, I'm worth at least half a million dollars, and I don't owe a cent, so far as I know, except for taxes coming due. There's another reason why I must make a new will. The man that I appointed as executor is dead, and I had

rather have one of my own choice than have one appointed by the court."

"The only way is to put it in the hands of trustees."

"Must I have more than one?"

"One will answer, but he is likely to die, and it is safer to have three, the usual number."

"Well, I think it will be all right if I pick out a young man like you. It will pay you well, Mr. Lethbridge, for you will get a percentage on the estate. You think the matter over, as to how to tie up the money, and whether you will accept the position of executor, and I will come in to-morrow, and we will fix the papers up. Man proposes, but God disposes, and I don't propose to put off until to-morrow what ought to be done to-day. By the way, Mr. Lethbridge, I have a tenant, one Patrick Harrigan, who is three weeks behind on his rent. If he don't pay up by Saturday, I want him put out, but I will see you about that to-morrow. I'm going up now to try to collect the rent he owes me."

When David Emerson arrived at the door of the tenement occupied by Patrick Harrigan, he first knocked without getting any response, and then tried to open the door. His next move was to kick it violently.

"Who is that?" came in a gruff voice from within. "Stop kicking that door or I'll smash your head."

“It is my door,” said Mr. Emerson, “and I will kick it all to pieces if I want to. You had better open it, or I will break the lock.”

The key was turned, and Mr. Emerson entered the room. Mrs. Harrigan was sitting in a chair with her head upon her arms, which were resting upon the table before her. She was in too advanced a state of intoxication to notice what was going on.

“Well, Harrigan,” said Mr. Emerson, “I understand you will be three weeks behind to-morrow night. Why don’t you pay your bills like an honest man?”

“It’s easier for you to go without it than it is for me to pay it,” the man insolently replied.

“Well, it will be a great deal more profitable for me to put you out on the sidewalk than to let you stay here for nothing.”

“If any man tries to put me out, he will find it a hard job,” growled Harrigan, who was in that state of ugliness in which liquor often leaves those who partake of it.

“Well, I want you to understand,” said Mr. Emerson, “that I won’t stand any fooling. Either you pay me the money you owe me for the last two weeks right now, and pay this week’s rent promptly next Monday, or out you’ll go.”

“I think you’ll go out first,” and Harrigan savagely grasped Mr. Emerson by the shoulder, and

pushed him toward the open door. The landlord was old in years, but he was still strong and wiry, and he resisted Harrigan's efforts to eject him. Besides, he had full command of his faculties, while Harrigan was too intoxicated to use scientific methods, and depended wholly upon his brute strength. He had forced Mr. Emerson to the top of the long flight of steps which led to the street, when the latter, by a dexterous move, released himself from his grasp, and sprang back into the room.

"Oh, you want to see who is the best man, do you?" yelled Harrigan, as he rushed at Mr. Emerson, but this time he adopted new tactics. He caught the old man by the coat and vest at the back of his neck, and, exerting all his strength, pulled him to the floor. Then he dragged him to the head of the steps, and threw him down. Mr. Emerson reached out wildly with both hands to catch something to break his fall, but the hand-rails were beyond his reach, and he fell upon his head, striking the brick sidewalk at the foot of the steps.

"I guess you know now who is the best man," and Harrigan went back into his room, slamming and locking the door. As he uttered the words, Mrs. Magruder appeared from her room. She saw and recognised Harrigan. Then her gaze fell upon the man lying prostrate upon the sidewalk, from whose wounds a large pool of blood had collected.

She leaned over to lift up the head of the wounded man. As soon as she saw his face, she knew that it was her landlord, Mr. Emerson. She had no reason to love this man, for he had once threatened to turn her out of doors, but in every woman's heart the love of humanity is strong.

She ran down the court toward Minton Street, and at the corner looked in all directions for a policeman, but could see none. Then she remembered that the police-station was only a block away. Reaching there, she breathlessly exclaimed: “Mr. Emerson, the landlord, is badly hurt in Schwelkers Court. Pat Harrigan kicked him down the steps. Somebody come and help him.”

In a few moments, Mrs. Magruder and an officer were on their way to Schwelkers Court in an ambulance. Mr. Emerson was taken immediately to the Emergency Hospital, where all the resources of medical science were resorted to in his behalf, but with no avail. He did not recover consciousness, and expired shortly before midnight. His daughter Eleanor had been sent for, and was with him when he died.

The next morning, while Chester Lethbridge was glancing through the news summary, his eye came upon the name of David Emerson and he read the account of the shocking death of his client. He lost no time in going to Mr. Emerson's house,

where he found his daughter utterly prostrated, not knowing what to do or to whom to turn.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you, Mr. Lethbridge," she cried. "What am I to do, now that father is gone? He took charge of everything, and I know no more what to do than a child. Can't you help me, Mr. Lethbridge?"

"Have you no relatives living in the city or near it?" was his first question.

"My father has a sister who lives in Wollaston."

"Would she come and stay with you?"

"I don't know," replied Eleanor; "she has not been to see us for a good many years, but I used to go to see her when I was a little girl, and she was always very good and kind to me. You see, Mr. Lethbridge, I have been away from home very little, and know very few people, and those that I am acquainted with, I don't know intimately enough to ask them to come and stay with me."

"If you wish, I will go to Wollaston at once, and see your aunt. What is her name?"

"Martha Emerson," Eleanor replied. "Everybody there will know her. She is a seamstress, and goes out working by the day."

Chester called a carriage, and was driven to his office. He told his assistant that important business took him out of town, and that he might not return until late that afternoon. Then he was driven to the station.

On reaching Wollaston, he had but little difficulty in finding the home of Miss Martha Emerson. It was a modest two-story house, not far from the railway station. The door was opened by a middle-aged, sharp-featured woman, who cast a stern and forbidding glance on the young man. He inquired if Miss Martha Emerson lived there.

“Miss Martha Emerson has lived here for the past twenty years,” said the woman. “Would you like to see her?”

Chester hoped that Miss Emerson was a pleasanter looking and talking woman than her supposed servant. When he was seated in the little parlour, the woman turned to him, and said, sharply:

“Well, I am Miss Martha Emerson. What’s your business with me?”

“My name is Chester Lethbridge, from Boston. I am a lawyer —”

“I have nothing to do with lawyers,” snapped Miss Emerson. “I own my house, and pay my taxes, and all the money I owe is this month’s milk bill, which isn’t due for a week yet.”

“I didn’t come to see you professionally.”

“Well, what did you come for then?”

“Have you a brother, David Emerson, who lives in Boston?”

“We had the same father and mother.”

“My visit here,” Chester continued, “is to in-

form you that he met with a severe accident last night."

"Well, he has got money enough to pay for doctors and nurses, if he is not too mean to do it."

Chester felt that his path was not strewn with roses.

"He was assailed by one of his tenants, from whom he was trying to collect some back rent."

"Just like him, to do his own dirty work, instead of paying somebody to do it for him. Well, I am sorry for him, and for his daughter Eleanor, who is a good girl, but what can I do?"

Her reference to Eleanor gave Chester a gleam of hope. He had intended to break the news gently to the sister, but he saw that such an effort on his part was wholly unnecessary.

"Well, the fact is, Miss Emerson, your brother died from the effects of the injury he received, about midnight —"

"And you have come to ask me to go to the funeral, I suppose. Well, I don't know whether I shall go or not."

"No," replied Chester, somewhat sternly, for the apparent hard-heartedness of the woman repelled him; "I came at Miss Emerson's desire to ask you if you cannot come and stay with her."

"Until after the funeral, I suppose. She will find some better company after he is buried, and she comes into her fortune. Did he leave a will?"

“Yes.”

“Did he leave me anything?”

“I think not, Miss Emerson. Your brother was going to make a new will, and perhaps he intended —”

“I don’t think you are called upon to explain what my brother’s intentions were.”

“You are not quite fair to your niece,” Chester continued. “She does not wish you to come simply for a few days. She wants you to come and live with her.”

“Till she gets married, I suppose. There will be plenty after her. A girl with lots of money don’t have to wait long for a suitor.”

“If you will allow me, Miss Emerson,” persisted Chester, for he was determined to say what he had to say, “I will mention your niece’s proposition. It is this: that you come and live with her. She will purchase an annuity for you, which will pay you five hundred dollars a year during your lifetime, and while you live with her she will pay all your personal expenses. If you choose to leave her, or she wishes you to return home, you will still have the annuity.”

“Well,” Miss Emerson finally resolved, “I can see that Eleanor needs some one with her. I will go with you, but it is for her sake, and not for my brother’s. He has never done anything for me, and

I don't feel called upon to do anything for him, but Eleanor is an Emerson, and I will do all I can for her."

"She will be greatly pleased and made happy by the result of my mission," said Chester. "Can you return with me?"

"It is rather short notice, but I am used to going when I am called. I'll pack up a few things and put them in a bag, and then I'll go and put a newspaper around David."

Chester's eyes expressed his astonishment at her proposed action.

"You don't know who David is. Come into the dining-room, and I'll introduce you."

Chester followed her. The woman pointed to a window, in front of which hung a large cage containing a parrot.

"That is David," said Miss Emerson. "Hello, Polly. Hello, Polly. Pretty Polly, what's your name?"

"David Emerson," squeaked the parrot.

"What's your sister's name?"

The bird hesitated for a moment, and then said: "Martha."

"Did you ever give me any money?" was the woman's next inquiry.

"Half a dollar. Half a dollar. Half a dollar," and the words were spoken very distinctly by the parrot.

“What became of it?”

“Burned her pocket. Burned her pocket. Burned her pocket,” screamed the bird, and then it burst into a wild, weird laugh that gave Chester a chill as he listened to it.

“That is all I have to remind me of my brother and his generosity to me.”

As Chester had told Miss Emerson, Eleanor was delighted to see her aunt. To his astonishment, Miss Emerson took Eleanor in her arms and kissed her tenderly upon the forehead, at the same time saying: “Poor girl, I will do all I can to comfort you,” and this was said in such a sweet and sympathetic way that he could not believe that the words came from the same woman who had carried on the dialogue with the parrot. She had insisted upon bringing the bird with her, saying that there was no one to care for it if she left it, and after David’s cage had been wrapped in paper, it had accompanied them on their homeward trip.

That afternoon, after completing all the arrangements for the funeral, Chester called again upon the Emersons. In the course of the conversation Eleanor asked her aunt what she intended to do with her house.

“Well, if I stay here with you, I suppose I shall have to let it. It will go to rack and ruin if it is left long with nobody to look after it.”

"Is there any land connected with it?"

"About half an acre. Up at the back, I have quite a little orchard, some apple and pear trees. There is room for a good vegetable garden, but I have had enough to do with the needle, without going out and working with a spade and a hoe."

"How much would you let it for?"

"Fifteen dollars a month."

"Would that be furnished?"

"Of course not, although I would have no objection to letting it furnished; that is, if I took some things that I don't want other folks to handle and locked them up in one of the rooms and kept the key. In that case, I should want five dollars more a month to pay for the wear and tear, because there wouldn't be much left at the end of the year, if the family had children."

"Well, auntie," said Eleanor, "I think I will hire the house. I am going to ask Mr. Lethbridge to go somewhere with me this evening, and when I come back I will give you a decided answer."

"Going out this evening?" exclaimed Miss Emerson. "What! before your father is buried? I don't think you ought to."

"I will tell you all about it when I come back, and I know you will not blame me."

It was quite dark when Chester, accompanied by Eleanor, left the house. She had told him that she wished to see the Magruders.

When they reached the tenement, they found Mr. Magruder seated by the stove, smoking his pipe. Two children were in bed, while Mrs. Magruder was crooning an old Scottish lullaby to the baby whom she held in her arms.

“I have come, Mrs. Magruder,” said Eleanor, “to thank you for your kindness to my poor father.”

“The poor man was that helpless that I could do no less.”

“I know that, but if you had not obtained assistance just as you did, he would have died in the street, and that would have been even worse than to die as he did, at the hospital. I can never be too grateful to you, Mrs. Magruder, for the opportunity that I had to be with him when he passed away. How are your children?”

“Well, the two oldest ones are pretty healthy, but the baby doesn’t seem to thrive. I think it is this basement. We don’t get much sun, but it is so handy for me, because I can hang my clothes out in the yard, and I don’t have to go to the top of the house. Then I do some washing for outside people and make a little money to spend on the children, for Sandy there is sometimes out of work for a month at a time, and it is hard to get along.”

“Would *you* like to live in the country, Mr. Magruder?”

“That I would. Before we came to America we

had a little house in the country, and after I was through my work at night, I used to raise some potatoes and turnips, and it saved us some money."

"It would be fine for the children, wouldn't it, Sandy?" said Mrs. Magruder, glancing toward the bed in which two of her children were asleep, and then looking at the infant in her arms, while a look of motherly pride showed itself on her face.

"Mrs. Magruder," said the young girl, "I wish to testify in some more substantial way than by simple thanks, my appreciation of your kindness to my father. Now I have a proposition to make to you, which I hope you will accept. I am going to rent a house at Wollaston, not far from the city."

"I know the place," broke in Sandy. "A man wanted me to go out there and live, about the time I came here. He wanted me to buy a house, but my work wasn't steady, and I wasn't sure that I could meet the payments."

"It is quite near the railroad station," continued Eleanor, "has half an acre of land, and quite a little orchard. Now, if you will go out there to live, it shall cost you nothing the first year for rent. I will pay it. The next two years, I will pay half the rent. By that time, you will, no doubt, have got along so well that you will be able to pay the whole rent, without its becoming burdensome. The house is furnished, and you will not be obliged to take

anything with you that you have here, unless you wish to.”

After Eleanor returned home, she told her aunt what she had done.

“Eleanor,” said Miss Emerson, “you have got some heart. Your father never had any. I had one, but it was crushed out of me long ago. I hope you will live to make a good use of the money that your miserly old father has wrung out of poor people like Mrs. Magruder.”

At Miss Emerson's request, Chester Lethbridge was appointed by the Probate Court as executor of her father's will. The settlement of his vast estate obliged Chester to become a constant visitor. He found himself thinking quite often about Eleanor Emerson, — her beauty, her charm, her sweetness. Then another thought came to him. Whoever married a woman of her fortune could attain anything that he had looked forward to, or hoped to gain. Why should not he try to win such a prize? These thoughts filled his mind as he walked homeward after spending the evening with Eleanor and her aunt. But the next morning, when Sareta Lempster brought her handsomely written sheets and laid them upon his desk, the illusion of the previous evening was dispelled, and he thought only of the brown eyes which looked timidly into his.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE NEW LOVE.

ABOUT a week after the burial of Mr. Emerson, Chester suggested to Miss Emerson and Eleanor that he thought a change of scene would do them both good.

"I know a very comfortable place, a farm in a little country town in Maine. It is late in the season, but to my mind, the country is never so beautiful as in the fall, when the leaves have turned."

"I think so, too," cried Eleanor. "The contrasts of the rich reds and yellows with the brown trunks of the trees and the evergreens form a delightful picture."

"Well, I don't think so," said her aunt. "I detest the country on general principles, but falling leaves always remind me of death and destruction."

A few evenings later, when Chester called, Eleanor told him that they had decided to go to North Gayville. He wrote at once to Mr. Judkins, and receiving word that the ladies could be accommodated, he purchased their tickets, and saw them on board

the train with their belongings, which included the parrot cage, for Miss Emerson at the last moment declared that she wouldn't stir a step, unless she could take David with her.

Soon after her arrival, Miss Emerson became engaged in wordy contests with old 'Ram Judkins, in which Scriptural texts were the weapons. In a few days, 'Ram had used all those that he knew by heart, and he was obliged to read the Scriptures diligently in order to secure fresh ammunition. Not so with Miss Emerson. Her *répertoire* seemed boundless, and 'Ram was forced to admit that, for the first time in his life, he had met more than his equal in his chosen line of warfare.

Miss Emerson was in constant dread for fear that some accident would befall her beloved parrot. Its cage hung from a window in the second story of the house, but she declared that a cat could jump from a branch of a tree which was not far distant, and reach the cage. So Farmer Judkins, who liked to please everybody, spliced a couple of ladders together and sawed off the branch. This led Miss Emerson to remark that the country people were all right, but she detested the country itself just as much as ever.

One morning, at the breakfast table, she declared that she had not slept a wink all night, because the owls kept up such a hooting. Then she shocked

old 'Ram by remarking that she wasn't afraid of the next world on account of fire, but if owls, and loons, and crickets were to be found there, she knew she should go crazy in less than a week.

The farm work for the year was nearly over, with the exception of the gathering of some late fruit in the orchard. This gave Jethro plenty of spare time, and he became, by general consent, Eleanor's escort. They went driving through the surrounding country; they made a trip to the far-off hills, and Eleanor proved herself to be quite a mountain climber.

Eleanor enjoyed boating, and went out many times upon the pond with Jethro, who was not only a good oarsman, but a fine swimmer. Miss Emerson had been asked to accompany them upon their drives, and also when they went out upon the pond, but she firmly declined all such invitations.

"I don't like horses," she said. "They call them intelligent animals, but I never saw one that knew enough to keep from kicking and shying or bolting."

"But a rowboat doesn't shy," said Eleanor.

"No," said her aunt, "but they upset, and very easily, too."

One day, one of those bright October days when the sky is blue and the air crisp and clear, Eleanor told Jethro that it would be a fine day to go boating.

"I wish I could go with you, Miss Eleanor," he said — he always addressed her as Miss Eleanor,

as everybody called her aunt Miss Emerson — “I wish I could go, but father expects me to barrel up those winter apples out in the orchard. A storm is likely to come up any minute, and, if they are blown off the trees, they won’t be worth nigh so much, as they get bruised when they fall.”

Eleanor pouted at this speech. What were a few barrels of winter apples compared with the pleasure it would give her to go boating? As far as money went, she would willingly have paid for all the fruit in the orchard to have her own way. She had been restrained and curbed so much during her young life that, with the knowledge of her freedom, had come a desire and an intention to cast off all the old trammels.

She walked slowly down through the orchard that bordered upon the pond, and looked out on its shimmering surface. The more she looked, the more she longed to be out upon it. Just then she caught sight of the Judkins’s rowboat drawn up on the shore. Since Jethro could not, or would not take her, she would go out alone. There could be no danger, as she had learned to row a few days before.

Springing into the boat, she picked up an oar and began to push vigorously against the bank. The boat grated on the sand, and then swung out into the lake. The next instant there was a shock,

a scream, and a splash. The boat had run into a sunken rock, and the force of the collision had thrown Eleanor, who was still standing, into the lake.

Her scream was heard by Jethro, at work in the orchard. He ran down to the edge of the pond in time to see Eleanor sink from sight. He marked with his eye the place where he had last seen her white dress, threw off his coat, hat, and shoes, and, with sturdy strokes, swam rapidly toward her. Once more she came to the surface, but Jethro found that he was not near enough to her to clutch her dress. When she came up for the third time, he caught her in his arms, and struck out for the shore. He did not have to swim very far, for the water was so shallow that he was able to cover more than half the distance by walking.

Reaching the shore, he walked quickly up the long path which led from the pond to the house. While walking through the water, he had carried her with her head over his shoulder, for he had read that this was the proper position in which to hold persons rescued from drowning. When he reached the shade of the trees, he took her in his arms, as though she had been but a child.

As Jethro looked down upon her, it seemed to him that he had never seen such a beautiful face before. Although the colour had vanished from her

cheeks, and her eyes were closed, the lips had not lost their bloom. The temptation was irresistible. He bent forward and imprinted a kiss upon Eleanor's lips. At that moment he heard a low chuckle, and, looking up, saw his brother Ichabod peering at him from behind a tree. Jethro turned red to his temples.

"That confounded boy!" he said to himself; "if he wasn't my brother, I'd —"

When he had espied Ichabod, he had stumbled and nearly fallen with his burden, but he recovered himself, and completed the balance of the distance by running. He entered the house, as he had on the former occasion, when he bore the body of his little sister Polly, and this time, as then, his advent was greeted with cries of consternation and alarm.

But Jethro's anger at Ichabod was misplaced. The youngster followed his brother toward the house. Hearing the sound of horses' hoofs, he looked toward the road, and saw Doctor Patten's buggy. He ran after him, screaming at the top of his voice:

"Doctor Patten, somebody's sick!"

Jethro had placed Eleanor upon the bed in her room, and had turned to answer the numerous excited questions addressed to him, when Ichabod entered, followed by Doctor Patten.

"Here's the doctor," cried Ichabod, "just in time. I saw him going by, and got him for you."

Jethro went back to the orchard to finish his work on the apples. He was wet through to the skin, but he did not mind that. What young man would if he was being consumed by the fire of love? He had thought he loved Stella Briggs, but, when he had kissed Eleanor, he had experienced a new and exquisite sensation, which had never thrilled him before.

After he had rolled the barrels up to the barn, he sat down on the old settle to think over the events of the day. Ichabod came from the house and approached him.

"Wouldn't you like to hear the latest news from the patient?" he said.

"Yes," said Jethro, throwing him a quarter of a dollar; "be sure you keep your mouth shut, or I'll horsewhip you."

"Well," said Ichabod, keeping at a respectful distance, "Doctor Patten says she will get over the ducking all right, but I heard ma ask him what was the matter with her mouth? It is all swollen up, and the doctor said he didn't know just what it was, but he was afraid she had got pizened."

Jethro took up a windfall and threw it, just escaping the youngster's head.

As soon as Eleanor had recovered and was able to see any one, she sent for Jethro to come to her.

"What can I do," said she, "to express my

gratitude to you, Mr. Judkins, for risking your life to save mine?"

"I didn't risk anything, Miss Eleanor, for I can swim like a fish. Besides, the water wasn't more than six feet deep where you fell in, anyway."

"That doesn't answer my question. What can I give you to show my gratitude to you for saving my life? I might have drowned in six feet of water."

Jethro blushed and said: "I don't want anything, Miss Eleanor. Your thanks are enough."

Then he bashfully retreated from the room. He found Ichabod out in the barn.

"How's her mouth, Jethro? I heard dad say once that the hair of a dog was good for the bite. You had better hurry up that moustache of yours, or she will die before it gets grown out."

Jethro grasped a pitchfork, and made a movement as though he would impale Ichabod on its tines, but his young brother soon distanced him, and he gave up the chase. Then he sat down in the barn to think what he could ask for a reward, and whether she would give him what he wished if he asked for it. Then he thought of Stella, and he was in a very disturbed state of mind when he drove over to the post-office after the mail that evening. There was a letter for him in Stella's writing. He opened it, and read that which, a

month before, would have caused him great sorrow, but which now filled him with relief and joy. She told him that she had come to the conclusion that she did not care enough for him to be his wife.

"Well," he thought, "that's the way the old song goes, 'Off with the old love and on with the new.'"

"Eleanor!" exclaimed Miss Emerson a few days later, as she entered her niece's room, "I am going back to Boston. I always detested the country, and now I am sick to death of the people who live in it, with the exception of the few good people who live in this house. I won't listen to any arguments, Eleanor. If you don't go, I shall take David and go alone."

Eleanor, herself, felt that it was time to return home, for Mr. Lethbridge had written her that there were several business matters that required her decision. He also told her that, in his opinion, it would be advisable to get a new agent, for, since the assault upon her father, the present agent had been afraid of his life every time he entered Schwelkers Court, and wished to resign his place. That evening, after supper, Eleanor said to Mr. Judkins: "We have decided to return home the day after to-morrow."

That night, Jethro did some heavy thinking in

the solitude of his own room. When he retired, his mind was evidently made up. "I will do it," he said, "if I never see her again." The next evening, he invited Eleanor to go with him on a drive. "This is our last night, you know."

Eleanor was vain, but vanity is always excusable in a woman, especially a pretty one. She dressed herself in her best, and Jethro regarded her with eyes full of admiration. They entered a long stretch of woods, and Jethro allowed the horse to walk slowly.

"Miss Eleanor," said Jethro, "you asked me one day what I wanted as a reward for saving your life. I said at the time that I wanted nothing but your thanks, but I've thought of something —"

"What was it the king said?" asked Eleanor. "It was something like this, I believe. If it were half of my fortune, I would give it to you."

"Well, I don't want money so bad as that," said Jethro, "and I wasn't thinking of taking money, anyway. It only takes three little letters to say what I want, and I have written them down on this piece of paper."

As he said this, he took a small piece of paper from his pocket, and held it up before Eleanor's eyes. The three letters were "Y-O-U."

Eleanor started to laugh, but quickly restrained the impulse. Then she turned to him and said:

“Jethro, let us talk seriously about this. Do you really love me?”

“With all my heart and soul and body!” cried Jethro. “Once I fancied I was in love with another girl, but that is over. I never felt for her as I feel toward you now.”

“Well, I will be honest with you, Jethro. I have seen very little of the world. Although my father was wealthy, we had not many visitors. I have met very few young men. I don’t know my own heart, but I like you very much, and I can never express my gratitude —”

“Don’t try, then; I don’t want you to marry me for gratitude.”

“Well, then, Jethro, I will make a proposition to you. I am going home to-morrow. I wish you to go with me. I need a person, as an agent, to look out for my property, which is largely real estate. He must attend to the repairs and collect the rents. I will engage you for two years. At the end of that time, if my heart tells me that I love you, we will become engaged, and, in a year from that time, I will be your wife. I wish to see something of the world. After seeing it,” and she cast a glance at Jethro, who was regarding her attentively, “I may be willing to settle down as Mrs. Jethro Judkins.”

So, when the Emersons left for the city, Jethro

went with them, and was soon installed in his new position. He took hold of his duties with a will, and, after he had once learned the details, was as successful as earnest. He sent home a large part of his salary to his father, and, before the end of the second year, the mortgage on the old homestead, both principal and interest, had been paid.

Chester Lethbridge came often to the house, usually in the evening, to consult Eleanor about sales, purchases, and investments. He had approved of Jethro's selection as the agent for Eleanor's property, but the idea had never entered his mind that the young man from the country was a suitor for the hand of the rich heiress. One evening, after a long and confidential talk with Eleanor about business matters, he had referred to her possible future; in fact, he had ventured so far as to speak of the coming time when she would be married, and the duties which he performed would be transferred to her husband.

"Are you getting weary with your task, Mr. Lethbridge," asked Eleanor, "or do you think your services are underpaid? Perhaps there is a way in which I can more fully requite them, for I consider them invaluable."

What did she mean by these words? If taken in a purely business sense, they were easily understood, but, if meant to be taken personally, they might mean much more.

He ventured to take her hand in his at parting. He had never done so before, for he had always considered their relations of a business, rather than of a personal, nature. She did not remove her hand, and he held it in his own while they were finishing their conversation. Chester Lethbridge felt that now, if ever, was the time for him to speak. He could see only the beautiful girl who stood before him, but, at that moment, the parlour door was opened, and Miss Martha Emerson looked into the hallway.

“Eleanor, my dear, did you know that it is nearly eleven o’clock?”

Chester released his clasp on Eleanor’s hand, bade her a hasty good-night, and walked rapidly homeward. The illusion was dispelled, the opportunity lost. He had thought there could have been no more auspicious moment in which to ask her to become his wife. But that thought had been followed instantly by the question: Do you love her? As though in answer to that question had come before him the face of Sareta Lempster, and he could see those brown eyes of hers, gazing up into his with a questioning look in them. No, he was not sorry that he had not spoken his love to Eleanor Emerson, but he was sorry that he could not say it to Sareta Lempster.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“BECAUSE I LOVED HIM.”

THE Rev. Stephen Holton, accompanied by Stella Briggs, who was announced on the bills as Miss Frou-Frou, had been on their tour about six months, stopping in all the principal cities, and visiting also the smaller cities and towns, when they arrived at Red Gulch, a small mining settlement in Colorado. This, like many Western towns at that time, was plentifully supplied with drinking-saloons, and, on pay-day, the proprietors of these places managed to secure a large portion of the miners' earnings.

It so happened that Mr. Holton and Stella arrived at Red Gulch several days before the monthly pay-day. The only hall in the town was hired, and quite a large audience assembled. Mr. Holton was impressed with the idea that Red Gulch needed another lecture, and, at the close of the first one, announced that another meeting would be held, and on an evening which proved to be that of pay-day. This announcement was partic-

ularly unpalatable to the saloon-keepers. On the morning of the proposed second meeting, Stella received an anonymous letter.

“MISS FROU-FROU:— We don’t mean you no harm. Some on us have heard you sing in the theatre, and none on us would harm a woman, but we want you to tell that man who talks temperance that he ain’t wanted here, and he had better give up that meeting and leave town, or there’ll be trouble.”

The letter was signed: “From them who run the town.”

A nameless terror took possession of Stella. Why should she feel so? As the letter said, they intended to do her no harm. Why should the fact that they proposed to drive Mr. Holton out of town affect her so strongly and so forcibly? She did not stop then to divine her own feelings. She was a practical young girl, and saw that force must be met with force. But what could she do? Then the thought came to her that in one of the plays in which she had appeared, she had needed a revolver. The pistol had never been loaded during its use upon the stage, but she remembered that she had loaned it to a member of the company, who, when he returned it, remarked that it was

loaded, and that she had better keep it in that condition, for she might need it some day.

She found the case which contained it at the bottom of her trunk. She removed the weapon, and slipped it into the end of her music-roll. She decided not to say anything to Mr. Holton about the letter, for she knew that he would pay no attention to it, as he was not a man to be influenced by threats of any kind.

They started on their way to the hall. Their course took them by the principal saloon in the town. Standing in front of it was a crowd of men, who were talking loudly, and laughing at the remarks and rough jokes of one of their number. As Stephen Holton and Stella approached, they lined across the sidewalk, obstructing their further progress. The young evangelist turned to step into the street, intending to cross to the other side, and thus avoid trouble, when the gang again spread out in such a way as to prevent his progress in the intended direction. Then Stephen asked why they interfered with him.

One of the men said, turning to Stella: “Say, you didn’t give him the warning that we sent yer, did yer? You might ’a’ known we meant business.”

“What do they mean?” asked Stephen, turning to Stella.

“We mean,” broke in the spokesman, “that we

don't propose to have any more temperance meetings in this town. We sent a note to this young lady, advising you to get out. P'raps she told yer and p'raps she didn't, but as it don't seem to have had any effect, we'll make it plain to yer in another way."

The only reply that Stephen made to this speech was to motion to Stella to take his arm, and, turning to the sidewalk, they advanced boldly toward the men. At this, one of them struck Stephen a violent blow in the face. The assailant then drew back, and drawing a revolver, pointed it at Stephen.

Without stopping to think of possible consequences, Stella drew the pistol from her music-roll, cocked it, and fired. The man whose pistol had been aimed at Stephen fell to the ground. Cries of rage came from the throats of the gang. They flourished their revolvers, and one of the men fired a shot, striking Mr. Holton, who fell prostrate. Stella now lost what little self-possession she had shown up to that time. She emptied the remaining five barrels of the revolver, and two more men were brought down.

The pistol-shots attracted the attention of the sheriff, who was in the saloon. Rushing out, he demanded to know the cause of the shooting. Stephen could not speak, and Stella refused to utter a word. She was placed under arrest by the sheriff, and Mr. Holton was taken to a house which was

used as a hospital by the miners, who were often injured in their work, and the only doctor in the village was called to attend to his wounds.

Stella was taken to the sheriff's house, and locked up in a room which was used as a cell. Early the next morning, Stella asked the sheriff's wife if she could get some intelligence of Mr. Holton's condition, but told her on no account to refer to the fate which had befallen her. The woman returned with a note from Mr. Holton, which he had written with great difficulty. In it he thanked Stella for saving his life. He told her that his wound was a slight one, and that he would be out in a few days, when the proposed meeting would be held.

Although the town had but one doctor, it had several lawyers, and one of them came to Stella, and proffered his services in her defence. He went over the case with her. Then he shook his head gravely.

“ It looks rather bad, miss. The law in this State allows you to shoot if your life is in danger, but all these fellows are ready to swear that no harm was intended to you, and that they only meant to frighten Mr. Holton, so he would leave town. They were put up to it by the saloon-keepers, and they did not get enough money out of it to pay for being hung as murderers. At any rate, I will do the best I can for you.”

The trial was postponed for a week, for the doctor had said that Mr. Holton would not be able to be out before that time. The appointed day arrived. The witnesses, as the lawyer had said, swore that no actual personal harm was intended to the young lady or to the clergyman; and that the girl had shot three men, and had wounded one of them so seriously that the doctor was afraid his chances were small. Stella knew that she would be called upon to give her version of the affair. She felt in her own heart why she had fired the shots, but she could not stand up before those men and tell the whole truth, when Mr. Holton's feelings, as regarded herself, were unknown to her.

The time was fast approaching when she would be called upon to give her testimony. Suddenly the sheriff's wife entered the court room, and, unseen by the others, passed a letter to her. At the same time, the judge announced that the doctor had made an "affidavy" that it would be impossible for the clergyman to be present at the trial, for inflammation had set in, and he feared that an attack of fever would follow.

Stella tore open her letter with trembling fingers. It was not very long, for it takes but few words to tell the story of love; and that short letter conveyed to Stella the precious news that the man whose life she had saved, loved her, and, in that letter,

asked her to become his wife, and to come to him as soon as she could. Stella crushed the letter in her hand, and, as she did so, her name was called.

In a low and steady voice, she told her story. The judge turned to her, and asked in a somewhat stern manner: “What led you to use your revolver on these men? They had told you that they did not intend to harm you. They had said, so they have sworn, they meant only to frighten the clergyman.”

Every eye in the court room was fixed upon Stella. She nerved herself for the ordeal, and, facing the judge, said in a voice, the sweet tones of which were heard in every part of the court room: “I had every reason to think from their actions that they would kill him because he had not obeyed their warning. I had not shown him the letter, and I felt that if any harm came to him, it would be my fault.”

“Yes,” said the judge, “that is all right, so far as it goes, but why did you shoot at the men?”

Stella answered him with a voice which betrayed her intense feelings: “I fired at them because I loved him!”

Stella sank back in her chair in the prisoners’ dock, and a hush fell upon the court room. After a long pause, the judge spoke.

“The evidence is all in, I suppose. The court will hear the argument for the prosecution.”

The gentleman referred to arose and said with some hesitation: "Under the circumstances, your honour, I think I shall let this case go to the jury without further remarks."

This short speech was greeted with loud demonstrations of satisfaction from all parts of the room, which led the sheriff to call for order in a stentorian voice. The judge then addressed the counsel for the defence, and informed him that the court was ready to listen to his argument.

That gentleman said: "As my learned brother has expressed his willingness to allow the case to go to the jury without further remarks, I shall follow the same course which he has taken, and submit the case in its present form."

Another storm of applause came from the spectators, and again the sheriff called for order. The applause was renewed, however, when the judge declared that under the circumstances he would give the case to the jury without any charge. Then the foreman, after a moment's whisper to each of the jury, arose and said: "Your honour, we have already decided upon our verdict. It is '*Not Guilty*.'" Again applause broke forth, and the efforts of the sheriff to restrain it were futile.

As soon as she was free, Stella flew at once to the bedside of her lover. As the doctor had feared,

he was in a high fever. She did not leave him for more than a couple of hours at a time to take rest absolutely needed, until he was pronounced convalescent. Then Stephen insisted upon speaking the words of love which he had written in the letter.

“Since I first saw you, Stella,” he said, “your face has been constantly before me. I did not understand my own feelings. I tried to banish them, and fled from the city. But the little town to which I went, I found, had been your home, and everything there reminded me of you. When you fell at my feet that night at the chapel, I knew that I loved you, but I could not speak, for they had told me that another loved you, and that you loved him. When I heard that you were to be put on trial, I forgot him, and thought only of you, and my love for you. They have told me that you said the reason why you shot our assailants was because you loved me. I shall take that as my answer, and claim you as my wife.”

Stella clasped his hands in hers, and said: “Take me when you will, Stephen; and as for any other, I never really loved Jethro Judkins. Before we left North Gayville, I told him so, and a few days ago I wrote him that I had concluded that I did not love him, as I had promised him to give him a second answer one way or another within the year.

There was no engagement between us, and I have never thought that I was in any way bound to him, unless I chose to be. I have never felt toward him as I have toward you, dear." She leaned over and kissed him, for he was too weak to rise.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DICK HURLBURT'S CONFESSION.

As soon as he was able to resume his work, Stephen insisted that Stella should become his wife at once. The morning of the wedding, Stephen and Stella chanced to visit the sheriff, to inquire into the condition of the man the girl had most seriously wounded. They learned that he had got nearly well, when he went off on a drunken spree. That had set up an inflammation, and now he was sick abed, and, as the sheriff thought, about done for. "I think," the sheriff concluded, "you had better go up, and do a little praying for him, or it will be too late."

Stephen promised that he would, and soon reached the hut where Dick Hurlburt (that was the wounded man's name) was living. The dying man lay upon a rough bed. His hair was matted and disordered, his beard long and unkempt, his face red and bloated, while there was that look in his eye which foretells delirium.

Stephen seated himself in a chair by the bedside, and waited for the man to speak.

"I suppose you are the parson," he said at last. "They told me that the time had come for passing in my checks, and that they were going to send for you."

"I am a clergyman," Stephen responded, quietly.

"I have seen a good many of them," said the man, "but I never met but one that suited me. What's your name?"

"Holton."

"Holton?" cried Hurlburt, and he lifted himself upon his elbow. "What's your other name?"

"Stephen. Stephen Holton."

"From Boston?"

"Yes," replied Stephen, "I lived in Boston for a number of years, and was pastor of the Bethany Mission Chapel."

The man sank back again upon his pillow, and closed his eyes. He opened them again, and said: "Did you ever know anybody in Boston named Lempster?"

"I was once a guest of a gentleman named Henry Lempster, and was introduced to his son, Charles Lempster. I am also acquainted with the son's wife, Mrs. Sareta Lempster."

"I thought so," said the man. "You don't know me?"

Stephen replied: "They told me that your name was Dick Hurlburt. It is new to me, and I don't remember ever seeing you before."

"Well, I don't wonder at your not knowing me, but I might as well tell you who I am. I am Charles Lempster."

It was Stephen's turn to be startled, but he did not allow his feelings of astonishment to become manifest.

"Why did you desert your wife and go West?" he asked.

"Don't you know? I thought Hodges would put the whole thing in the newspaper, but it seems he's kept quiet for her sake."

"Do you mean Mr. John Hodges, the detective?"

"Yes, he was after me. I don't think he wanted me so much as he did the money."

"What money?" inquired Stephen, completely mystified.

"Oh, I see," said Charlie, "the whole thing has been kept dark. Well, I might as well tell you the whole story. I suppose the reason they sent for a parson was so I could confess my evil deeds to you, and have you pray for me, so I might as well begin.

"Well, my wife, Sareta, had a lodger, an old sea-captain. He had lots of money, and he was fool enough one night to bring it home with him, and tell my wife how much he had — about fifty thousand dollars. She told me all about it, and that the old captain was ill, and she had given him some chloroform to soothe him. He had left his door

open so we could go in if he was sick in the night. I told my wife I would go in and see if he was all right before I went to bed. I meant to have that money. I'd been speculating in stocks, and had put up for a margin my note for one thousand dollars. My margin had been wiped out that day, and my note was due the next. If there was any trouble about it, my father would find it out, and would learn how I had been deceiving him all the winter. So when I heard about that money, I saw a way out of all my troubles.

"The old captain was awake when I went in. I asked him how he felt, and he said he was a great deal better. I went to his coat, took out his handkerchief, which I soaked with the chloroform on the table, and started as though I were going to leave the room, but I reached over the head of the bed, put the handkerchief down on the old captain's nose and mouth, and kept it there until he was a goner. I think he would have died of heart disease, anyway, before morning. Then I fixed things so as to look as if he had taken an overdose of the stuff, took the money, went back to my wife's room, and went to sleep."

"That was a cruel murder," cried Stephen. "How have you lived since with such a burden of crime on your soul?"

"Soul?" cried the man. Then he gave a mocking

laugh. "Oh, I have lived a hell of a life since then. Hodges got after me, but I was too smart for him. I bought a ticket for Kansas City, and then went South until I brought up in Arizona. I tried mining, but it was mighty hard work. I had never been used to working, so I went back to gambling. I gave the name of Jack Fisher, and got a big reputation in those parts for drinking, gambling, and fighting.

"Finally, I fell in with a fellow named Bill Dike. He had a good paying claim, but wanted somebody to help him, so we became partners. We got along well together, until one day he accused me of stealing some of his gold dust. I had taken it, but I wasn't going to own it, so I told him he lied. Then he struck me in the face, and I hit back. We drew our knives, and went to work to settle the matter. He was taller and bigger and stronger than I was, but when he drank liquor it made him muddled. Liquor makes me stronger and brighter than ever. He got the fall on me, and we went down, he on top. My right hand, with which I held my knife, was under me. He had to lift himself with his left hand before he could strike. As he lifted up, I got my hand out, and I stabbed him in the back. The knife went clean up to the hilt, and must have reached his heart. I took all his gold dust, and started for the North. They might be looking for

Jack Fisher, so I took the name of Dick Hurlburt. I went to gambling again, but they were too smart for me up here, and soon cleaned me out. The day that you came, Tom Comstock, who keeps a saloon where I hung out, offered me ten dollars to help run the temperance parson out of town. You know how that ended. I have told you all, now you can do your praying."

"*Have* you told me all?" asked the clergyman.

"Of course I have. Who knows better than I do what I have done?"

"Who shot Rudolph Neaves?" questioned Stephen, solemnly.

The man lifted himself upon his elbow again, and glared at Stephen. Then he uttered an oath. "Did he peach on me, after promising to keep it quiet?"

"On the contrary, he made oath to a deposition which was a lie, in order to save you and his other friends. He told me the truth on his death-bed to save his soul."

"Well, it was his fault anyway. He had a cursed, exasperating way of talking, and he threw some brandy in my face. That stirred up the devil in me, and before I knew it I'd killed him."

Again Lempster fell back upon the pillow.

"Did you say you knew my wife, Sareta?" he gasped. "Did she go to my father and tell him who she was?"

"No," was Stephen's answer, "I think she is too proud to introduce herself to your parents after your failure to do so. She waited for you to return, until her money was exhausted; then she sold nearly all of her furniture, keeping only enough to furnish a single room. She is working for Mr. Lethbridge, the lawyer. He gave her some work at copying legal documents in his office."

"That was good of Chester. He was always a good fellow. He loved Sareta, and he ought to have had her. He'll probably marry her now. I wasn't good enough for her. I would never have run away with her, but the old folks bucked against me so hard that I determined to have her. If they had consented to an engagement, it would probably have ended there, for I should have forgotten her after I had been in the city three months."

It was almost with a feeling of horror that Stephen contemplated the utter heartlessness and moral depravity of this man. But he had a Christian duty to perform, and he fell upon his knees at the bedside, and poured forth a fervent prayer, asking God to forgive this great sinner for his many crimes.

As he arose, Charlie said: "I suppose that mother and father and Sareta think I'm dead. Tell them that I am, and tell father and mother about Sareta. They will be good to her, I know. Don't tell them

anything else; there's no need for them to know what a rascal I've been. Only you and Hodges know, and I can trust you to keep the secret. Now, will you pass me my belt that is hanging up on the hook there?"

Stephen carried it to him. Charlie opened it, and took from one of its pouches a small leather bag. He passed it to Stephen, who took out a card printed, "Fidelity Safe Deposit Vaults, State Street, Boston," numbered 1976, and signed, "Thomas Lewis, Depositor," in Charles Lempster's handwriting.

"After I had paid my note, and taken out another thousand for myself," explained the dying man, "I hired that safe, and put the rest of the money and the will in it. My idea was to go out West for awhile, and then, if no one suspected me, to come back, get the money (which I didn't dare put in my own name), and take Sareta out to Chicago, where we could live comfortably. Then I meant to acknowledge her to my people, once away from Boston and independent of them. So I wrote them each letters, hinting that I might get a job out West as a result of this trip.

"But when I found that Hodges was after me, I had to give that plan up. You'd better take the card and key to him, and he will straighten things out."

After he had made this restitution, he moaned: "I may not live the day out, but I wish, Mr. Holton, you'd come in again and see me. Since I've told you all, and you've prayed for me, I'm much easier in my mind. You're the best parson I ever knew."

Early in the afternoon, Stephen went again to the hut. The woman who kept it met him at the door, saying, "You've come too late, sir. Dick's gone. There was a quart of brandy under his bed, and after you left he drunk it all. It drove him crazy, and he got up and shot himself."

And thus died Charles Lempster. He had caused the death of three of his fellow men; he was a robber and a thief, a gambler, a liar, and a drunkard! The only thing that could be said in his favour was that he had made Sareta Judkins his lawful wife, when he could easily have deceived and betrayed an innocent and unsuspecting girl.

CHAPTER XXX.

GATHERED THREADS.

THAT same evening Stephen and Stella became man and wife. The judge who had presided at Stella's trial performed the wedding ceremony, the crowd of miners who had tried to run Stephen out of the town were among the first to congratulate them at their wedding reception, which was the postponed temperance meeting. "You're a plucky chap, and you've got a plucky wife," said one. "You've shown your right to drink water in a whiskey town, which we let damned few do, and to talk temperance, which we haven't let a blasted soul do till you came. And I guess there's a good deal in what you say, too," he added. "Anyhow, I'm goin' to try your way for awhile and see." And as he spoke, so spoke scores of others. That temperance meeting was the most enthusiastic and successful that the young clergyman and Stella had ever conducted.

"Our life-work has begun well, dearest," murmured Stella to her husband, as they received pledge after pledge from those who had been their most violent opponents a short while since.

“How could it do else, now that you have become a part of it?” Stephen fondly replied. “It is you who have brought this about to-night, it is you who have brought such happiness to me; you are indeed your name incarnate — Stella, a star of hope and love.”

But little more remains to be told. After their marriage, Stephen and Stella made a flying trip to Boston to fulfil the duty of explanation and restitution that had been laid upon them. The matter of the stolen property was placed in the hands of Mr. Hodges, who, with the proofs furnished him by Stephen, secured the captain's will, and the forty-eight thousand dollars that had been lying in the safe-deposit vault.

When the will was placed in the hands of Chester Lethbridge, the quest that the old captain had so vainly made came to an end. For Mary Ann Lithgow, the sailor's lost sister, was no other than Chester's mother. The young lawyer thus became the possessor of that fortune which his former friend had committed murder to obtain.

As Lempster had surmised, his parents, on learning of his death and of the existence of his wife, were very kind to Sareta. They felt that a daughter had been sent them in place of the son they had lost. Sareta left her desk in Chester's office for the Lemp-

ster mansion, only to leave it a year later for a home of her own, as the wife of the man who had long loved her, and who had helped her in the hour of her greatest need.

Jethro Judkins served his period of love-probation sturdily and well. Under his energetic and tactful management, Schwelkers Court became a new place. A similar change for the better took place in the rest of the Emerson property, but in Jethro himself was the greatest improvement. The clever, if unformed, youth had become a keen, honest man of business and of maturity, worthy of any woman's hand. It is almost needless to say that Eleanor's was his reward.

The Judkins family were elated at the happiness of their children's future lives. They themselves were content with their own home-keeping, quiet life at North Gayville. Josh Willcutt manfully stuck to his promise of reform, and in the course of time became the owner of the village grocery store, a strictly temperance establishment this time.

Ichabod, on reaching his sixteenth year, was taken beneath the wing of Jethro and Eleanor, who gave him an excellent education. The boy's earnest spirit never failed, after the day of his sister's death, and in him some future time will be found an able assistant to Stephen Holton.

And Stephen and Stella? After their errand

to Boston they continued their tour, covering the greater part of the country in their mission. One circumstance connected with their trip gave them much encouragement. A newspaper writer, after referring in terms of great praise to both Mr. Holton's addresses and Miss Frou-Frou's singing, had added that he thought it would be a good idea to form temperance clubs to be named after Miss Frou-Frou, the members of which should wear a badge or button to indicate to their friends that they did not propose to take a drink at the bar that day either at their own expense or by invitation. The article was widely copied, and attracted much attention; and at many meetings, Stephen and his wife noticed that many of these badges and buttons were worn by their hearers.

As for the ultimate success of their efforts — the banishing of the bar and the closing of saloons — time alone will tell. They have at least taken one step in the right direction — they are reaching the hearts of the people, and gaining their support; more may come later.

One evening, after a spirited and strenuous meeting, as the two were alone, Stella said, half laughingly, "Stephen, don't you ever repent having taken up this mission? Just think of the comforts and fortune you might have had if you —"

"Had followed in the footsteps of my worldlier

brethren, who have laid up for themselves treasures of silver and gold," finished Stephen. "No, never shall I regret what I have done. I, too, have a treasure, far beyond all value. I hold it here in my arms — its name is 'Miss Frou-Frou.'"

THE END.

L. C. Page and Company's Announcement List of New fiction

The Flight of Georgiana

A ROMANCE OF THE DAYS OF THE YOUNG PRETENDER. By ROBERT NEILSON STEPHENS, author of "The Bright Face of Danger," "An Enemy to the King," "The Mystery of Murray Davenport," etc.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . \$1.50

Mr. Stephens's novels all bear the hall-mark of success, for his men are always live, his women are always worthy of their cavaliers, and his adventures are of the sort to stir the most sluggish blood without overstepping the bounds of good taste.

The theme of the new novel is one which will give Mr. Stephens splendid scope for all the powers at his command. The career of "Bonnie Prince Charlie" was full of romance, intrigue, and adventure; his life was a series of episodes to delight the soul of a reader of fiction, and Mr. Stephens is to be congratulated for his selection of such a promising subject.

Mrs. Jim and Mrs. Jimmie

By STEPHEN CONRAD, author of "The Second Mrs. Jim."

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated . . . \$1.50

This new book is in a sense a sequel to "The Second Mrs. Jim," since it gives further glimpses of that delightful step-mother and her philosophy. This time, however, she divides the field with "Mrs. Jimmie," who is quite as attractive in her different way. The book has more plot than the former volume, a little less philosophy perhaps, but just as much wholesome fun. In many ways it is a stronger book, and will therefore take an even firmer hold on the public.

The Story of Red Fox

Told by CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS, author of "The Watchers of the Trails," "The Kindred of the Wild," "Barbara Ladd," etc.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, with fifty illustrations and cover design by Charles Livingston Bull . . . \$2.00

Mr. Roberts's reputation as a scientifically accurate writer, whose literary skill transforms his animal stories into masterpieces, stands unrivalled in his particular field.

This is his first long animal story, and his romance of Red Fox, from babyhood to patriarchal old age, makes reading more fascinating than any work of fiction. In his hands Red Fox becomes a personality so strong that one entirely forgets he is an animal, and his haps and mishaps grip you as do those of a person.

Mr. Bull, as usual, fits his pictures to the text as hand to glove, and the ensemble becomes a book as near perfection as it is possible to attain.

Return

A STORY OF THE SEA ISLANDS IN 1739. By ALICE MACGOWAN and GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE, authors of "The Last Word," etc. With six illustrations by C. D. Williams.

Library 12mo, cloth . . . \$1.50

A new romance, undoubtedly the best work yet done by Miss MacGowan and Mrs. Cooke. The heroine of "Return," Diana Chaters, is the belle of the Colonial city of Charles Town, S. C., in the early eighteenth century, and the hero is a young Virginian of the historical family of Marshall. The youth, beauty, and wealth of the fashionable world, which first form the environment of the romance, are pictured in sharp contrast to the rude and exciting life of the frontier settlements in the Georgia Colony, and the authors have missed no opportunities for telling characterizations. But "Return" is, above all, a *love-story*.

We quote the opinion of Prof. Charles G. D. Roberts, who has read the advance sheets: "It seems to me a story of quite unusual strength and interest, full of vitality and crowded with telling characters. I greatly like the authors' firm, bold handling of their subject."

Lady Penelope

By MORLEY ROBERTS, author of "Rachel Marr," "The Promotion of the Admiral," etc. With nine illustrations by Arthur W. Brown.

Library 12mo, cloth \$1.50

Mr. Roberts certainly has versatility, since this book has not a single point of similarity with either "Rachel Marr" or his well-known sea stories. Its setting is the English so-called "upper crust" of the present day. Lady Penelope is quite the most up-to-date young lady imaginable and equally charming. As might be expected from such a heroine, her *automobiling* plays an important part in the development of the plot. Lady Penelope has a large number of suitors, and her method of choosing her husband is original and provocative of delightful situations and mirthful incidents.

The Winged Helmet

By HAROLD STEELE MACKAYE, author of "The Panchronicon," etc. With six illustrations by H. C. Edwards.

Library 12mo, cloth \$1.50

When an author has an original theme on which to build his story, ability in construction of unusual situations, skill in novel characterization, and a good literary style, there can be no doubt but that his work is worth reading. "The Winged Helmet" is of this description.

The author gives in this novel a convincing picture of life in the early sixteenth century, and the reader will be delighted with its originality of treatment, freshness of plot, and unexpected climaxes.

A Captain of Men

By E. ANSON MORE.

Library 12mo, cloth, illustrated \$1.50

A tale of Tyre and those merchant princes whose discovery of the value of tin brought untold riches into the country and afforded adventures without number to those daring seekers for the mines. Merodach, the Assyrian, Tanith, the daughter of the richest merchant of Tyre, Miriam, her Hebrew slave, and the dwarf Hiram, who was the greatest artist of his day, are a quartette of characters hard to surpass in individuality. It has been said that the powerful order of Free Masons first had its origin in the meetings which were held at Hiram's studio in Tyre, where gathered together the greatest spirits of that age and place.

The Paradise of the Wild Apple

By RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, author of "Old Love Stories Retold," "The Quest of the Golden Girl," etc.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative \$1.50

The theme of Mr. LeGallienne's new romance deals with the instinct of wildness in human nature,—the wander spirit and impatience of tame domesticity, the preference for wild flowers and fruits, and the glee in summer storms and elemental frolics. A wild apple-tree, high up in a rocky meadow, is symbolic of all this, and Mr. LeGallienne works out in a fashion at once imaginative and serious the romance of a young man well placed from the view of worldly goods and estate, who suddenly hungers for the "wild apples" of his youth. The theme has limitless possibilities, and Mr. LeGallienne is artist enough to make adequate use of them.

The Grapple

Library 12mo, cloth decorative \$1.50

This story of a strike in the coal mines of Illinois gives both sides of the question,—the Union and its methods, and the non-Union workers and their loyal adherents, with a final typical clash at the end. The question is an absorbing one, and it is handled fearlessly.

For the present at least "The Grapple" will be issued anonymously.

Brothers of Peril

By THEODORE ROBERTS, author of "Hemming the Adventurer."

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated \$1.50

"Brothers of Peril" has an unusual plot, dealing with a now extinct race, the Beothic Indians of the sixteenth century, who were the original inhabitants of Newfoundland when that island was merely a fishing-station for the cod-seeking fleets of the old world.

The story tells of the adventures of a young English cavalier, who, left behind by the fleet, finds another Englishman, with his daughter and servants, who is hiding from the law. A French adventurer and pirate, who is an unwelcome suitor for the daughter, plays an important part. Encounters between the Indians and the small colony of white men on shore, and perilous adventures at sea with a shipload of pirates led by the French buccaneer, make a story of breathless interest.

The Black Barque

By T. JENKINS HAINS, author of "The Wind Jammers," "The Strife of the Sea," etc. With five illustrations by W. Herbert Dunton.

Library 12mo, cloth \$1.50

According to a high naval authority who has seen the advance sheets, this is one of the best sea stories ever offered to the public. "The Black Barque" is a story of slavery and piracy upon the high seas about 1815, and is written with a thorough knowledge of deep-water sailing. This, Captain Hains's first long sea story, realistically pictures a series of stirring scenes at the period of the destruction of the exciting but nefarious traffic in slaves, in the form of a narrative by a young American lieutenant, who, by force of circumstances, finds himself the gunner of "The Black Barque."

Cameron of Lochiel

Translated from the French of PHILIPPE AUBERT DE GASPÉ by PROF. CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative \$1.50

The publishers are gratified to announce a new edition of a book by this famous author, who may be called the Walter Scott of Canada. This interesting and valuable romance is fortunate in having for its translator Professor Roberts, who has caught perfectly the spirit of the original. The French edition first appeared under the title of "Les Anciens Canadiens" in 1862, and was later translated and appeared in an American edition now out of print.

Patriotism, devotion to the French-Canadian nationality, a just pride of race, and a loving memory for his people's romantic and heroic past, are the dominant chords struck by the author throughout the story.

Castel del Monte

By NATHAN GALLIZIER. Illustrated by H. C. Edwards.

Library 12mo, cloth \$1.50

A powerful romance of the fall of the Hohenstaufen dynasty in Italy, and the overthrow of Manfred by Charles of Anjou, the champion of Pope Clement IV. The Middle Ages are noted for the weird mysticism and the deep fatalism characteristic of a people believing in signs and portents and the firm hand of fate. Mr. Gallizier has brought out these characteristics in a marked degree.

Slaves of Success

By ELLIOTT FLOWER, author of "The Spoilsmen," etc. With twenty illustrations by different artists.

Library 12mo, cloth \$1.50

Another striking book by Mr. Flower, whose work is already so well known, both through his long stories and his contributions to *Collier's*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, etc. Like his first success, "The Spoilsmen," it deals with politics, but in the broader field of state and national instead of municipal. The book has recently appeared in condensed form as a serial in *Collier's Magazine*, where it attracted widespread attention, and the announcement of its appearance in book form will be welcomed by Mr. Flower's rapidly increasing audience. The successful delineation of characters like John Wade, Ben Carroll, Azro Craig, and Allen Sidway throws new strong lights on the inside workings of American business and political "graft."

Silver Bells

By COL. ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD, author of "Hannibal's Daughter," "Louis XIV. in Court and Camp," etc. With cover design and frontispiece by Charles Livingston Bull.

Library 12mo, cloth \$1.50

Under the thin veneer of conventionality and custom lurks in many hearts the primeval instinct to throw civilization to the winds and hark back to the ways of the savages in the wilderness, and it often requires but a mental crisis or an emotional upheaval to break through the coating. Geoffrey Digby was such an one, who left home and kindred to seek happiness among the Indians of Canada, in the vast woods which always hold an undefinable mystery and fascination. He gained renown as a mighty hunter, and the tale of his life there, and the romance which awaited him, will be heartily enjoyed by all who like a good love-story with plenty of action not of the "stock" order. "Silver Bells," the Indian girl, is a perfect "child of nature."

 C0-ALP-074

